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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 385. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 16TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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May 16, 1896.

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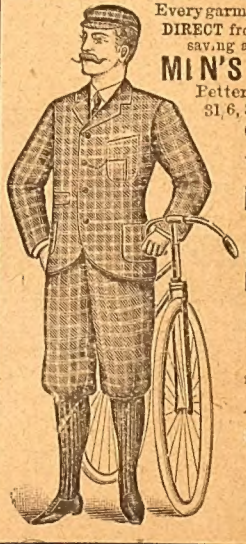

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Home Stories

EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 385.] For the Week ending May 16th, 1896. [One Penny.

THE LITTLE WHITE MONKEY.

"BUT, Colonel——"

"No, I tell you! I am sorry to refuse you, but your continual absences have been noticed in the regiment. Hereafter you must remain here."

"But, Colonel——"

"No, I say; you cannot go!"

"But, Colonel, I want only twenty-four hours——"

"Ah! I see, to pass the day at Paris. What do you do in Paris? Women, women, of course, always women! Bah! it's sickening how the young men of to-day plunge into such stupidities! Woman is an inferior, mischievous being who should be stricken absolutely from the life of every man—particularly an officer's. Read, work, do what you please here, but as for going elsewhere, give up all thought of it. Do you understand?" And Colonel Belpoygne put his horse to the trot.

Crushed and disconsolate, Marcel returned to his company. Never before had the Colonel shown himself so stubborn, so whimsical. Worse than all, never had he been known to reverse a decision. No more leaves of absence It was settled; Marcel knew it, and also that Zoe would be waiting for him. For he had already written her that he would be at the circus that evening. She would look for him in his usual place—one of those stools with which the *habitués* of the place loved to encumber the passage—the third to the left, near the entrance to the boxes.

Since the opening of the circus he had never missed a Saturday, and he had always witnessed Zoe's arrival, breathless and smiling, finishing dressing as she ran, in order to have time to give him a greeting before her number. This evening she would not find him.

The devil fly away with the Colonel! And Marcel, scowling and fuming, gazed with an irritated eye at his chief spiritedly caracoling before him, content with the small lecture delivered and wholly indifferent to the pain he had given. Kind and considerate when what he called his "dignity" was not in question, he was wholly intractable when it was, or he fancied that it might be. Nevertheless, his regiment loved him, in spite of the occasional tempests of anger that swept impartially the entire quarter, and he loved his men and permitted many a small lapse and peccadillo to pass unnoticed upon the score of human weakness, so long as it did not reflect upon the regiment. But women—ah! you have heard his lecture to Marcel; it only remains to add that so far—and they had watched him ceaselessly—not a single weak spot of this kind had the regiment been able to discover in the armour of their gallant but irascible Colonel. None knew that better than Marcel himself; but to-day—to-day of all days—the Colonel had been so hard, so fierce, so utterly, unreasonably cranky—truly it smacked of a hidden motive. A hidden motive? Exactly; but what?

Marcel was still revolving this conundrum, when re-entering the court of the quarter to view his company going past, he chanced to stop near his chief, at the moment talking to the sergeant-major.

"Then," said the latter, listening respectfully, "you go to-night, Colonel?"

"Yes, to Mans, to shoot partridges. I shall not be back before Monday morning."

Marcel smothered a cry of joy; a ray of light had pierced the darkness.

Could he get himself excused from the weekly "call" and fly to Paris by the seven p.m. express, he would still be in time for Zoe's entrance; next morning he could return before the mess hour and no one would ever suspect his little trip.

Drill hour over, Marcel wasted no time in getting to his room; he lathered himself with rice-powder, sketched with burnt cork and a wad of cotton a consumptive circle under each eye, and then, with a last satisfied glance at the mirror, betook himself to the yard where they were grooming the horses.

The officer of the day, a good soul risen from the ranks, was there inspecting the process.

"Heavens, lieutenant," he cried, as he caught sight of Marcel, "but you have a face on you!"

Marcel groaned dismally, responding feebly: "Headache, captain, and a regular corker——"

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"The sun this morning, doubtless. Better go in again, utenant, and lie down a while——"

"Lie down! To get up again immediately?"

"For the 'call,' you mean? Oh, I'll excuse you. Go in, go in, I say, man; I order you. A good night's sleep will cure that head of yours."

And Marcel, inwardly delighted, obeyed, explained to his orderly that if they came to ask news of him, he would be "sleeping" profoundly till eleven the next morning, then dressed himself leisurely and arrived at the station just in time to leap into the train. He had encountered no one; seven o'clock was the dinner hour, and besides, it was already quite dark.

At the first stop they made he got out, lighted a cigar, and began to pace the platform, glancing carelessly as he passed at the interior of the coaches. Suddenly he stopped, stared, and sprang back as if confronted by a ghost. There, by the open door of the coach at his elbow he had seen the face of Colonel Belpoygne, who was sleeping peacefully.

By what strange hocus-pocus did Colonel Belpoygne, who had gone to shoot partridges at Mans, lie sleeping in the express for Paris? Had he found out his —Marcel's—absence and taken the train to catch him? Was he really asleep now, or only feigning? But why, if chasing Marcel, should he be in a dress-suit? And in a dress-suit the Colonel certainly was, as anyone could see through the open buttons of his pearl-grey top-coat —a top-coat that he wore only on state occasions.

Marcel, deeply curious, returned to his own compartment, not to leave it again till Paris was reached and he had seen the Colonel pass before him at a smart walk, valise in hand.

More and more curious and puzzled, Marcel, in his turn, started off at a run, dined at a noted café, and at half-past nine sharp entered the circus building. The scene, in spite of the season, was a brilliant one. A tour of the stable assured him that Zoe had just arrived and had gone to her room to dress. So he strolled out into the corridor to glance over the hall.

A painful surprise awaited him. There, facing him in the front row, the "bald-heads' row" the world over, Colonel Belpoygne and his pearl-grey top-coat were majestically established. This second appearance of the Colonel dumfounded Marcel; decidedly the old gentleman was tracking him. And yet, how came he possessed of a stall—a stall on a Saturday evening, at that? Evidently he had engaged the stall, and having engaged the stall, as evidently he had premeditated the trip. Something was behind all this. Meanwhile it was prudent to make his escape and to warn Zoe, just then coming from her *box* to answer her "call."

"I'll be caught, you know, dearest, if I stay," said he, explaining breathlessly; "my Colonel's here; meet me after the performance at the waffle-man's stand." And he hurried away with a heavy heart.

Not that she was so very beautiful, this little Zoe, whose hair was neither brown nor blonde, neither curly to the eye nor soft to the touch; whose mouth was wide and filled with teeth of a dazzling brilliancy; whose limbs—rare things in circus women—were marvels of symmetry as well as suppleness; and whose skin, of a clear milky whiteness, had given her the name, "the little white monkey," by which she was "billed" throughout the city. Droll, frolicsome, irritating, charming, Venus herself would gladly have exchanged her straightest lines for Zoe's captivating angles.

Prompt to the minute at the appointed place, Marcel saw a *coupé* draw up to the kerb and a little hand emerge from it, apparently beckoning him. He hesitated a second; this carriage, so different from the modest *fiacre* that habitually carried Zoe, confused him slightly.

"You did not wish to come with me, then?" Zoe cried reproachfully. "Am I late, and are you vexed? But truly, truly, Marcel dearest, it was not my fault—I could not get away from him."

"Him?"

"An old stupid who worries me half to death—but wait, not now, I'll tell you all later."

"No, no, now, Zoe; tell me now. I cannot wait. How does he worry you so?"

"The same old story—love, riches, money, this *coupé*, everything I want, in exchange for—myself. But let's talk of other things—of to-morrow, how we shall spend it, you know. At home, I think, quietly; then, on Monday, the races, which I'm crazy to see."

"Ah! If we could, Zoe; but I must be at barracks by eleven to-morrow. I told you that I had run away; that the Colonel had refused me leave—forbade me, in fact, to come."

"What! Your Colonel is as selfish as that, yet comes himself to Paris to enjoy the circus?"

"A feather would have floored me when I saw him there—he, the Colonel, with his horror of all women!"

"Eh? Of all women?"

"Of all women. 'Inferior, mischievous beings,' he calls them, and refuses to admit that others may think differently."

"And your weekly leaves of absence?"

"Are at an end—done for."

Zoe began to laugh.

"The animal! The stupid, hard-hearted, hard-headed old—old goose!" she cried. "But don't worry yourself, Marcel, you'll get your leaves. Rest easy, we'll see what we'll see!" And Zoe began to laugh again.

Next morning, as Marcel sat gloomily thinking how little that evening was going to resemble the last, his room door opened and the waggon master handed him a letter. It was from Zoe, and ran thus:

"Arrange, Marcel, dearest—no matter how—to be in Paris, Thursday next, and at my house at nine a.m. sharp; there a note will tell you what to do. You will be free to return at noon, if you wish. Should they refuse you leave, come without; you must, for on this depends all our good times to come. Find inclosed a thousand kisses.

"ZOE."

This strange missive greatly perplexed Marcel. What in the world was the little monkey up to? Had she taken it into her head to arrange an interview for him with the minister of war? One thing was certain, if she had, she would have the interview, for, somehow or other, she always had her own way.

So Thursday morning at the hour named—written leave of absence in hand this time—Marcel found himself bowling comfortably along in a little uncovered cab to Zoe's house. Suddenly, just ahead of him, he recognised the form of Colonel Belpoygne. He again! This was decidedly unnatural!—and, with a word to the coachman, Marcel made up his mind to follow his superior officer, who was mounted, like a centaur, on a splendid cob, built like a bull, but which, all the same, bowed a trifle under the Colonel's two hundred pounds. He presently dismounted, called the stableman at the

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door of the circus to take his mount, and passed into the building by the private entrance.

"By George!" cried Marcel, staring, "can it be a rendezvous? Pooh, nonsense! Some horse-trade, doubtless." And Marcel drove on, while the Colonel was asking of the Cerebus at the door, "If Mdlle. Zoe had arrived yet?"

"Not yet, monsieur," the man responded, evidently well acquainted with the applicant for admittance; "she has a new act, and practises late to-day, you know, Colonel. Come in, sir, please, and wait a while."

Crossing the passage, the Colonel seated himself, as usual, in the front row of the empty circle, and to kill the time, mechanically began to inspect the curious spectacle that a circus presents of a morning. A stirring scene it is, too, especially when, as now, a "new act" was to be tried. Everyone, workers and idlers, comes in to see it, eager to know how the other will do, and from eight in the morning till one there is an endless, perpetual going to and fro, of artisans and players, clowns and jugglers, horses and riders, and, high over all, the vicious snap of the ring-master's guiding whip.

Colonel Belpoygne, interesting himself in the varied accoutrements—the hoops, banners, swings and trapezes—giving advice upon a thousand and one things that he had never before heard of, was beginning, nevertheless, to find the time long, when presently Zoe appeared. He rushed to meet her.

"At last!" he cried.

"I know—I know I'm late," she answered, red and breathless with hurry; "but I met someone and——"

"And forgot with this 'someone,'" broke in the Colonel with plaintive reproach, "the poor friend so ardently and anxiously awaiting you here?"

"On the contrary, I thought of you all the while he detained me."

"Truly?"

"Truly. But I must go and dress; it won't take me a minute."

Zoe reappeared, droll and charming in her working costume; tights of sky-blue, a short blouse of blue merino, clasped at the waist by a band of flexible silver; her short, frizzled hair floating free; her fresh, white, eighteen-year-old skin—ah! But the little white monkey was indeed a pretty sight.

Dazzled, open-mouthed, the poor Colonel stared at the strange little creature; never before had a woman affected him as this one did. He started, trembled, and made wild dabs at her, as, from time to time, she passed before his chair, whirling and gaily pirouetting on the back of the old white horse that served her as a practice steed.

"Look out!" he cried; "take care—you'll fall!"

"I fall? Never!" Zoe responded, quitting the rail of the circle upon which she had just jumped. "Truly, my Colonel, it isn't at all dangerous; you know how perfectly our horses are trained. To prove it, try yourself!"

"Try? Try what?" cried the Colonel, affrighted.

"Standing up on a horse."

"I—on a circus horse! Never in the world!"

"I insist on it."

"Impossible! My dear Zoe, think what you suggest!"

"I do, perfectly. You ask a favour of me. Well, favour for favour, you know, and the one condition upon which I consent to your wish. Besides, there's the safety-belt—you shall have that on"—Zoe sunk her voice to that tender, coaxing cadence so irresistible to a lover's heart—"and you will do this for me—to give me a pleasure—who loves you so much! There isn't the slightest danger, I assure you. The belt—the belt, Mr. Clarke, and bid them bring Jules, please."

"Jules?" murmured the Colonel, nearly swooning in his shoes; "who is—Jules?"

"Oh, the old ring 'hack' that all, even the children, ride, and kick and thump as much as they please."

"But, Zoe, if I lend myself to this madness, you swear——"

"I swear, yes," cried the little monkey, slipping her hand into the Colonel's great palm, but neglecting to specify as to what she swore.

Jules, a great roan thoroughbred, was still a tolerably superb ruin. Humiliated at first by his descent to the ring, he finally submitted. He had resigned himself to bear everthing but—the Colonel. He was the unexpected, the unforeseen; and when he mounted, with the assistance of the riders, to the pad on his back, Jules squatted and spread out his legs, believing that his last hour had come.

The people shouted, the Colonel groaned; after which they began to put him through his exercises; first, the tour of the ring, seated at a gentle trot. Then, with her own hands, Zoe adjusted the safety belt—a girdle, with a ring through which ran a cord to a swinging pulley; the rider held one end, the cord swung with the horse, and the rider, by its support, was able to recover his balance should he slip, and thus avoid a fall.

Here, however, the Colonel rebelled. "Halter his legs in that cursed string!" He swore he never would—swore it—then did it at Zoe's whisper—Zoe inundating him with glances full of promise, and murmuring pleadingly in his ear:

"One hoop, just one hoop, Colonel—one hoop and a banner!"

"One hoop and a banner," was it, that Zoe had said? Why one—two—four—eight—ten—twelve, the Colonel counted hastily; the entire garniture topping off with a yellow paper moon, was blocking the way. Yes, blocking it absolutely, with Zoe whispering now in his ear: "All of them—all of them, Colonel—hoop, and banner, and——"

Well, whatever it was she told him, it turned him as red as a poppy, and set Jules off again in slow, cadenced gallop round and round the ring, a groom running at his head and Mr. Clark pulling sturdily on the safety rope, to the end of which swung easily the Colonel's stalwart form.

How was it done? Heaven knows! A leap, a scramble, a clutch of the man, the banderolles were passed, and for Zoe's victim there remained but the big yellow moon, one side of it in the grasp of the clown, the other——

There was no time to see him; the moon was on him, the Colonel's head through the tissue, Jules at a standstill, and a voice, calm, polite, respectful—*the voice of Marcel*, the clown's *vis à vis* with the moon—solicitously murmuring at his elbow: "I trust that you have enjoyed yourself, Colonel?"

It was playing for high stakes; but Belpoygne was a man of spirit, and he took his punishment like a soldier.

"My dear child," said he, turning to Zoe, "if you meant to teach me a lesson, you have succeeded."

"My dear Colonel," the white monkey responded sweetly, "I wished only to show you that women are not 'inferior beings;' also, how needless is the pain you give us both when you refuse Marcel leave of absence."

Which, I need not add the Colonel, whether from prudence or a better motive, did not refuse again.

LE VIER.

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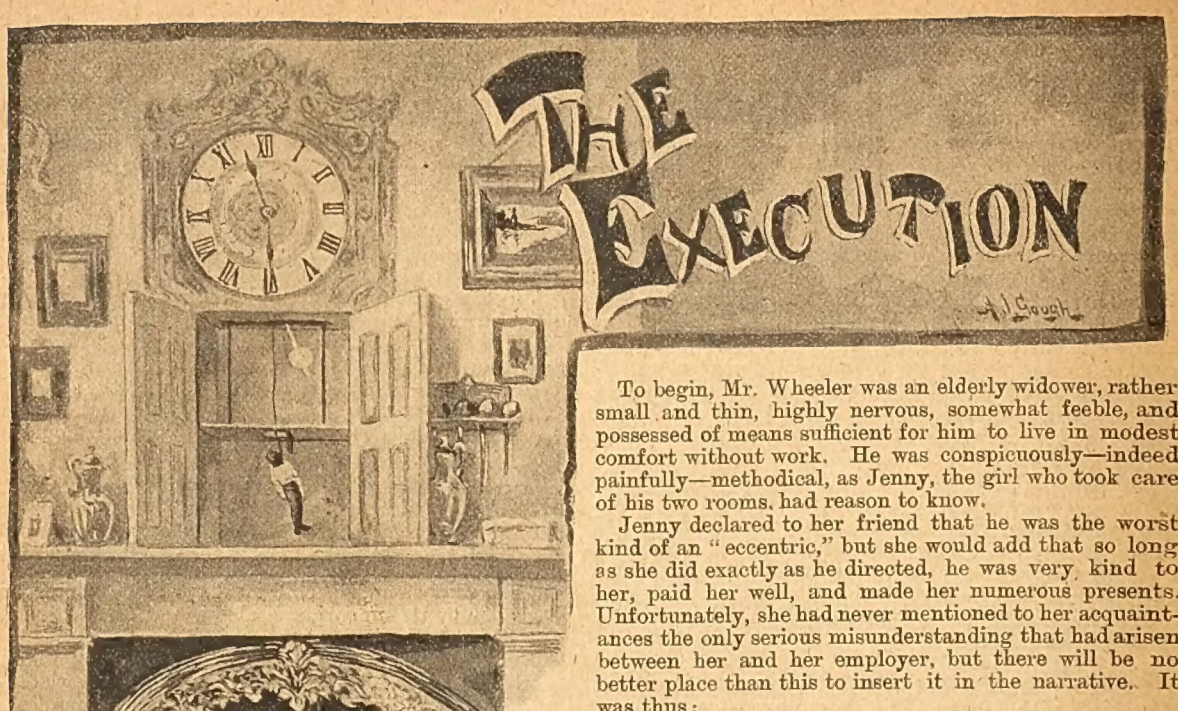

Mr. Austin Wheeler was startled out of his ten o'clock nap by a peculiar cry of distress from Theophilus, his cat. Wise in the ways of cats, and experienced in all the vocal expressions of Theophilus, Mr. Wheeler had cause to feel alarm when, upon opening his eyes, he saw the cat staring straight past him, every nerve in the large brindled animal's body on the strain, the hair along his spine upright, his tail slowly swinging to and fro, his ears rigidly fixed in listening, his eyes glowing with an unwonted light, and that low note of alarm, caution, or distress—perhaps all three in one—filling the chamber with its uncanny effect. It was such a sound as you may have heard cats give when worried by dogs.

Mr. Wheeler was wide awake in a moment. At first he supposed that the cat was looking at him; but when, in straightening himself from a reclining position, he had brought his face some two feet out of the cat's line of vision, and observed that Theophilus kept his gaze steadily as before, and, moreover, gave no heed to a call, Mr. Wheeler sent his glance in the direction of the cat's, and, as nearly as he could judge, found it to rest upon the clock. Instantly he made the startling discovery that instead of sleeping ten minutes, as had been his unbroken custom for years, he had really slept two hours, for the hands of the clock indicated midnight. More than that, he noticed that the little figure of a man which hung by the neck just below the clock was still quivering, as though it had but that moment dropped to the end of its string, whereas it should have been perfectly still.

That the nature of the shock which these discoveries gave Mr. Wheeler may be understood, it is necessary to explain one or two things.

To begin, Mr. Wheeler was an elderly widower, rather small and thin, highly nervous, somewhat feeble, and possessed of means sufficient for him to live in modest comfort without work. He was conspicuously—indeed painfully—methodical, as Jenny, the girl who took care of his two rooms, had reason to know.

Jenny declared to her friend that he was the worst kind of an "eccentric," but she would add that so long as she did exactly as he directed, he was very kind to her, paid her well, and made her numerous presents. Unfortunately, she had never mentioned to her acquaintances the only serious misunderstanding that had arisen between her and her employer, but there will be no better place than this to insert it in the narrative. It was thus:

The small figure of a man, to which reference has already been made, was a perfect representative of a criminal being hanged. The clock, a large, old-fashioned affair, had been let into the wall above the mantel, bricks having been removed in number sufficient to make the face of the clock flush with the wall. The ragged edges of the mural incision had been smoothed with plaster, which made a neat juncture with the wooden frame of the clock. The excavation had been extended below the clock, forming a narrow niche for the reception of the figure. In this niche, attached to the bottom of the clock, was a miniature gallows with beam, trap-door, cord, trigger, and the other essential mechanical devices employed in executions, everything being concealed by doors.

At half-past eleven o'clock every night, the mechanism of the clock would open the doors and spring the trigger, whereupon the trap-door would fly open and the little figure would fall through and hang suspended by the neck. The figure was neatly dressed in black, with a white shirt; its arms were strapped to its sides, its hands to its thighs, and its knees and also its feet together. To complete the picture, a hangman's black cap was drawn over the head, concealing the face.

Having accidentally opened the doors and seen the figure one day, Jenny cherished an uncontrollable curiosity to see the face. It so happened that she had never seen the figure hanging, for that was always at half-past eleven at night. For that matter, she did not know that the trap ever opened. All that she had ever seen was the figure standing rigidly on the gallows waiting to be hanged. But the gruesome picture of the little man standing there had always fascinated her, even after her original sentiment of horror and repulsion had passed. Accordingly, one day, when she knew that Mr. Wheeler had left for a stroll and to give her opportunity to put his room in order, and when experience

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with his ways made her sure that he would not return for two hours, she cautiously began an investigation.

Finding that the figure stood squarely upon its feet, without lateral support, she gently lifted it from the trap-door and drew it out as far as the cord would permit. She carefully loosened the noose, which was outside the cap and which pressed it closely against the neck, and then slipped off the cap. That which she then saw gave her so terrible a fright that she dropped the figure, screamed with all her might, and dropped in a senseless heap to the floor. There she lay unconscious for two hours, and there her master found her. Upon seeing at a glance what had happened, he became pale, and a look of singular ferocity and malignity distorted his features. With his foot he contemptuously turned the girl over, in order to get her out of his way, readjusted the cap and noose, and restored the figure to its original position, and then picked up Jenny, laid her on a lounge, loosened her clothing, sprinkled water in her face, and brought her back to consciousness.

After she had remembered what had happened, and had seen the hard, reproachful glance with which Mr. Wheeler was regarding her, she began to cry and to plead for forgiveness.

"Had you forgotten," he asked, "that I had particularly cautioned you never to touch that figure?"

"Oh, sir," she sobbed, "I am so sorry! It was very wrong of me, sir. You have been so good to me! Won't you forgive me, sir?"

The end of it was that he did forgive her, and that she promised faithfully never to tell any one what she had seen. But it was many a day before she could again enter that room without fear and shudderings. The slow, measured ticking of the clock was terrible, and the little figure standing behind its closed doors was a silent and formidable mystery. A thousand times did she wonder what it all meant—what dreadful history is illustrated. For months all her dreams were haunted by that terrible realistic little face, every detail of its strangely handsome features, distorted and discoloured though they were by death from strangulation, being impressed ineffaceably on her memory. In a vague fashion there had come to her certain stories of a strange tragedy far back in the life of her master—something about a beautiful young wife many years ago, and her death, and her husband's terrible revenge; but what all that had to do with the ghastly little figure in the clock, if anything at all, Jenny could not imagine.

When Mr. Wheeler, after having been awakened by Theophilus, saw that he had slept two hours instead of ten minutes, and that the body of the litt'e figure was still quivering, as though it had but just fallen through the trap, he was thrown into alarm and consternation. He had never overslept a moment before. Exactly at ten o'clock every night he had taken a nap of ten minutes in his chair, had read till eleven, and then had turned to face the clock and steadily watch the hands as they slowly went round to thirty minutes past eleven, when the little doors would spring open and the figure would drop to the end of its cord, and there sway awhile, turn slowly about as a man would in its place, and finally come to rest; then Mr. Wheeler would slowly replace the figure, close the doors, and go to bed.

On this night of his great surprise, Mr. Wheeler, at first unable to trust the evidence of his senses, felt his pulse, and, finding it bounding with alarming violence, concluded that he was ill, and that his illness had caused him to oversleep. But what explanation could be found for the singular conduct of the cat and the swaying of the figure? Mr. Wheeler examined the doors of his rooms and found them locked—no one could have entered. No draught which might have made the body sway after it should have been still nearly half-an-hour was discoverable. Nothing that might have caused the cat's uneasiness was visible. Could it be possible that some supernatural agency was at work?

Mr. Wheeler was too hard-headed a man to entertain that idea for a moment. So he finally tried to satisfy himself with the explanation that he had been taken ill in the first minutes of his slumber; that Theophilus had become uneasy at his long sleep and this violent breach of his habits, and, associating the clock with his master's movements, had regarded it as the cause of the irregularity; and that as for the swaying of the figure it might have been caused by a fly or some other insect, and that this untimely swaying alone might have accounted for the cat's uneasiness. Mr. Wheeler, forced to take that explanation to bed with him, had an uneasy night in its company.

He was so full of the affair the next morning that he made a close examination of the clock, and found it in perfect order. Although he had no watch, he observed that his clock was exactly in time with the tower clock which he could see from his window, and that was as it should have been. After puzzling over the whole problem some time, he decided that he could only go on as formerly, depending upon the future to solve the puzzle.

That day he went about matters as usual. Loss of sleep and the shock to his nerves had been injurious,

Mr. Wheeler examined the doors of his rooms.

but he might retrieve all that. Everything proceeded in the old orderly way until the time came for him to take his ten o'clock nap in the evening. At first he had thought of dispensing with it for a night or two,

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that he might watch for a repetition of the strange occurrences; but after reflecting that it would be unwise to break into the regularity of his habits he decided to take his nap. Accordingly, he composed himself in his chair, saw that Theophilus was sound asleep on the rug, and in a moment, being very tired, he was slumbering.

It seemed to him that he had not been to sleep a minute when the same distressed cry from Theophilus roused him into alarmed wakefulness. Again was Theophilus gazing strangely at the clock. Quickly turning his glance in that direction, Mr. Wheeler saw that the hands again pointed to midnight, and that the little figure was swaying as though it had but just fallen through the trap. This was more than the wretched man's nerves could bear quietly. He trembled, and a perspiration damped his forehead. These things, happening once, made a situation strange enough. A repetition of exactly the same kind—three extraordinary elements entering into it—made a coincidence which was terrible.

Mr. Wheeler found his pulse bounding as before. He examined the clock, and saw that it was in perfect order. He felt that he had not slept two hours, but on a matter of that kind, he knew that no man's judgment is reliable. He replaced the figure and sat for a long time in deep thought and anxiety, at the end of everything he went to bed. His sleep again was uncertain; but, if he had slept for two hours, how could he expect sound slumber? Still, it seemed to him that if he had slept two hours in a cramped position in a chair, he would have felt the strain on his muscles, and yet there was none whatever.

On the third night he threw aside his custom of taking a nap, and decided to watch the cat and clock. At ten o'clock, anxious though he was, the habit of falling asleep came upon him so strongly that he had to resort to various artifices to keep awake. Ten minutes later, he had lost his drowsiness. The cat slumbered quietly on the rug, and the clock and the figure gave no sign of irregular behaviour. Eleven o'clock arrived. He took up his familiar position facing the clock. Slowly he came under the influence of the old spell; his face paled and hardened; he became rigid. In two seconds more the doors would fly open and the execution would occur. A second passed. Then the clock stopped. At the same moment the cat, which had been asleep on the rug, sprang to his feet; the hair arose along his spine, his tail swung to and fro; his eyes, glowing with a strange light, were fixed upon the clock, and he gave a cry of distress and alarm.

It was some time before Mr. Wheeler could get his courage in hand. When he had done so he went to the clock, opened it, found it properly wound up and otherwise apparently in order, and then started it again. The pendulum swung easily, the little doors opened, the execution went forward with the accustomed precision, and the clock attended to its business without any further ado. Mr. Wheeler pushed forward the hands seven minutes, after consulting the illuminated dial of the tower clock, and then sat down, weak and ill, and watched the clock from his chair for the rest of the night. Nothing further went amiss.

In the morning, his hands trembled, his knees were unsteady, his eyes were bloodshot, and his face was haggard and white. Theophilus behaved strangely. This wisest, most complacent, most decorous of cats, exhibited an unusual conduct in divers ways, all ascribable, undoubtedly, to apprehension. Although he no longer paid attention to the clock, he strode about the room stealthily, his tail swinging, his ears erect, and his whole bearing indicating the presence of strange sounds. Mr. Wheeler himself, attentively as he listened, could hear nothing peculiar. Yet the conduct of the cat alarmed him. He strained every sense to catch the least uncommon happening. He examined the walls inch by inch, putting an ear to them now and then, watching Theophilus and the clock meanwhile.

Presently the time arrived for him to take his breakfast; but as he was ill and had no hunger, he fell into a chair and groaned. In a little while the Frenchwoman came in, and started in fright when she saw his face.

"Oh, monsieur!" she exclaimed, "you eel! Ah, what a peety! I bring you some coffee, quick, monsieur."

"If you please, madam," weakly responded the wretched man.

Afterwards he felt a little better; but a violent headache came on, and it seemed as though his temples would burst. He forgot all about his morning walk, and, lying back in his chair, could only watch Theophilus. He had not let any light into the room, and that which managed to get through the blinds, though to him seemingly so brilliant that it burnt him, was insufficient for Jenny, who, a few minutes before her accustomed time, burst into the room in extraordinary excitement.

"I'm sure it was the same," she gasped breathlessly, speaking to herself, and supposing that her master was away; "but I'll see."

Not observing him crouched in his chair, she hastily threw up the blinds, went straight to the clock, and pulled open the little doors. Then she drew the figure from the little trap, with fierce eagerness loosened the noose and removed the black cap, and then, letting the figure fall to the end of its cord, she staggered back to the mantel, clutched her throat, and panted, her wide-staring eyes fixed on the distorted features of the figure.

"Jenny!" called her master.

She screamed and sprang away. Her excitement must have been great for she exhibited neither shame nor contrition for being caught in the act of violating her master's orders. On the contrary, as soon as she could realise that it was he that was present, and not some dreadful thing that evidently she feared, she ran to him and threw herself on her knees at his feet, seizing his hand and clinging to them for protection. Every one of her features and movements expressed terror. Her throat was filled with sobs and gasps. She swayed and writhed in an effort to speak.

"Oh, Mr. Wheeler," she finally found voice to say, "I've seen him—the same as that!" pointing to the figure.

Mr. Wheeler's face became livid, and his eyes seemed to sink back into his skull.

"Where?" he whispered.

"Out there. He was slipping away from your door. His face frightened me so that I ran, and he caught me, and twisted my wrist, and asked me what I was afraid of. He is a young man. I don't know what I said—it was something about a rope around his neck. He said that if I said a word about having seen him, he would kill me. And there was murder in his face!"

Mr. Wheeler shrank deeper into his chair; and there he sat in complete collapse, his jaw hanging, his eyes rolled up and half-closed, and his breathing hardly perceptible. His appearance alarmed the girl, who feared that he had died. She shook him and called him by

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name, but his response was only a faint and petulant groan. She ran and brought the French woman, and together they chaffed his hands, and placed him on a lounge, and covered him heavily, for he was cold. Sooner than might have been expected, and before the arrival of a physician who had been summoned, Mr. Wheeler's face began to brighten, and his pulse and breathing to become strong. He refused to eat anything, and directed the women to leave him alone, taking occasion to whisper to Jenny a request that she should say nothing to anyone about what she had seen.

He got to his feet and looked round anxiously for the cat; Theophilus was sleeping peacefully on his rug. Then he staggered to the clock and carefully readjusted the figure on the trap, taking a great deal of time, for his hands were extremely weak and uncertain. Then he sat down, trembling. The Frenchwoman presently brought him a tempting little meal.

"Thank you," he said. "That is just what I need—I am very hungry."

Threw herself on her knees at his feet.

But as soon as she was gone he gave Theophilus the food to pretend that he himself had eaten. Meanwhile the colour in his cheek had deepened and the light in his eyes became brighter; worse than that, he began to talk, and as Theophilus, to whom he had often talked before, was his sole audience, Theophilus had to listen to him.

"Theophilus," he said, "it is a lie. The girl is mad! Do you understand that? How could he come back, when I myself hounded him to the gallows, when I myself had the last glimpse of his living face when the black cap was drawn over it, when I myself, after it was all over, saw that same devilishly handsome face all swollen and purple, just as I afterwards reproduced it there, Theophilus?" pointing towards the clock with a meagre, trembling hand. "And yet, Theophilus, she saw something, and that something has come to life and has taken up its abode in my clock, Theophilus."

Theophilus, each time that his name was called, blinkingly opened his eyes and then drowsily closed them again.

"Thirty years ago, Theophilus. Let me say, twenty-nine years, four months, and eleven days. Three hundred and sixty-five times twenty-nine—but where do the leap years come in? Nine times five, forty-five, eight, thirty-two, seven thirty—ten thousand, five hundred and something; hundred and twenty, eleven; ten thousand and—ten thousand and—ten thousand and—more than ten thousand times. Theophilus! He's been hanged by the neck ten thousand and something times, Theophilus! Think of that! Isn't that sufficient to kill a man? What a fool that Jenny is!"

The feeble man rose in his excitement and reeled about the room, his face crimson and his eyes aflame.

"When, thirty years ago, she listened to his smooth voice and lying tongue, and he stole her away from me—oh, Theophilus, had I been born a cat! And in less than a year he was beating her like a dog."

By this time the poor man was reeling wildly about the chamber, stumbling over chairs and tripping over rugs.

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"Beat her like a dog, and I knew nothing of it! Like a dog, Theophilus. Do you understand that? And that wasn't all."

His husky voice fell to a whisper. Half-stooping, half-crouching, he halted in front of the cat, and, with outstretched arm and a finger pointed at the cat, he hissed:

"He murdered her one day—murdered her! And for that, Theophilus," he straightened himself, threw back his head and shoulders, raised both arms triumphantly above his head, and passionately exclaimed in a loud voice: "for that I drove him to the gallows; and I saw him fall through the trap, and I saw his purple face when the cap had been lifted."

He slowly drooped after that outburst, gradually settled into himself, and then sank groaning into his easy-chair, where he sat staring vaguely at the clock.

At eleven o'clock that night, Mr. Wheeler, so weak that he could hardly move, composed himself as usual to watch the execution. Had not his senses become so dull, and had it not happened that Theophilus was without the range of his vision, he certainly would have noticed that strange occurrences were on the march. It is true that about twenty minutes past eleven he heard Theophilus give voice to alarm and distress; but he only laughed foolishly at that, and in a thick, maudlin fashion tried to reassure the animal, knowing nothing of the stealthy entrance of a man through the door.

"That's right, Theoph—Theoph—Theoph—what's your name, Theophilus? What's your name, hey? He's all round here, old fellow, all round here. Can feel him—smell him. You afraid, Theophilus? Don't be afraid, I'm not afraid. Ha! Don't do that, Theoph—Theoph—Theoph—what's your name, Theophilus? What's your name? Six minutes more. Keep an eye on the doors up there. Theoph—Th—Th—ophilus. Gracious me! what a name for a cat! Ha, ha! What a name for a cat! Theos—Theoso—phy. Oh, what a name for a cat! Four minutes more. Keep an eye on the doors up there—doors up there."

And thus he rambled on until the little doors flew open. One more swing of the pendulum, and then the execution. Mr. Wheeler had nerved himself to witness it—to drink in the sweetness of it. His dull eyes and deathly pallid cheeks had taken on new life, and with suppressed respiration he had leaned lurchingly forward, his mouth drooping and his head nodding as with a heavy palsy.

But before the pendulum could swing once more and release the trigger, the dark form of a young man uprose between him and the clock, and shut off his view.

For a little while, Mr. Wheeler could not understand what had happened. The stranger had brought his face directly before Mr. Wheeler's, and the wretched man stared helpless and speechless at the apparition. "Well," said the stranger, his hard voice comporting well with the sinister cruelty on his face; "well, I have brought you to this much sooner than I expected. You are more nervous than I thought. And now, after torturing you thus far, I dare carry it no further, for fear that I shall not leave sufficient life in your miserable body to treat you as my father treated your wife and as you treated him. It is all a delicious revenge. You had forgotten all about me, eh? Perhaps you did not know that she gave birth to me before my father put an end to her. Well, I am his son and your wife's son, and I inherit my father's spirit. Do you understand all that."

The stranger roughly seized him by the shoulders.

It was not clear that Mr. Wheeler did. He still stared in that hopeless way, not knowing that the execution had regularly occurred, or, perhaps, believing that the figure had stepped forth from the clock to punish him. He tried to mumble something. The stranger roughly seized him by the shoulders, and that roused the sinking man. With a tremendous effort, Mr. Wheeler staggered to his feet, pitifully weak. Then in a burst of life, he threw his arms aloft and cried:

"He was a coward and a murderer, and I hanged him nine times five, forty-five, eight, ten thousand——"

* * * * *

The stranger, once again in his own room (which adjoined that of Mr. Wheeler), looked up at the wall.

"I don't think they will ever find that opening behind his clock," he ruminated, as he made final preparations at midnight to leave, "for I have closed it as carefully as possible." He regarded his hands, which appeared to have been badly scratched. "Hang the brute!" he exclaimed. "Who ever heard of a cat fighting for its master's life?" He drew on a pair of gloves and quietly slipped away.

Reginald Baird.

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THE REAR-GUARD.

A Sketch.

A GENERAL in command may order a retreat to secure a stronger line, or because he fears disaster, or for several other reasons which might be termed goodly policy by a court of inquiry, but there is peril in any backward movement. So long as the lines are standing firm, so long will men die bravely. Even if a wing is being beaten back and the fact is unknown in the centre, men will die with their faces to the foe.

An army corps is an anomaly. It will charge into the face of death time and again. Every man will obey like a machine. No man knows what fear is. That is because it is at least holding its ground if not gaining something. Let the order run down the lines for a retrograde movement, and there is a panic observed at once. Have other corps been defeated? Has the enemy pierced the centre? Has the battle been lost? Men ask these questions of each other in cowardly whispers, and within ten minutes four-fifths of the command are ready for flight.

All veterans have experienced this sensation more than once, but no man can explain it. He was there to die. To stay was to be killed. He could fear death only in running away. It wasn't that he was running away to save his life, but from some menace which he could feel and yet not understand. An army of 40,000 men, bravely pushing ahead and feeling victory in the air will leave its dead at every wall and fence and ditch, and on every stone, and cheer and cheer as it pushes on. The same army, if withdrawn for any reason, will be so worked up within half-an-hour that the bursting of a shell will break the formation of a whole brigade.

It is the rear-guard a general looks to with deepest concern when compelled to withdraw in the face of the foe. It is the post of honour for someone seeking death. It is the place of all to try the nerves of the oldest veterans. A victorious army is jubilant and aggressive. A defeated one is nervous and fearful.

The rear-guard steps in between the wolf and its prey. It must retreat, but it must fight as it falls back. There will be dead men, but they will not even be moved aside to escape the wheels. The wounded may be placed in the fence corners or dropped into the ditches, but there will be no time for gentleness.

Here we swing into the main road, up which the last hurrying, straggling company has disappeared. There is a swamp with a long causeway between us and the enemy's advance. Up the road they are trying to save the waggon train. We must give them half-an-hour. First comes the enemy's cavalry. Our two guns are planted to sweep the narrow road, and never a man lives to get within pistol shot. Then he pushes forward a column of infantry. They fill the road and overflow into the swamp, where ooze and water are hip deep. We shell them—we change to grape and canister—we fill the black waters of the swamp with dead men. But there are 5,000 men forming that living, moving wall—a thousand of us.

They push forward from tree to tree, and from bush bush, and we are driven back. It is either retreat or annihilation. We leave our dead and wounded and fall back. The enemy cheers again as he advances, and we turn and fire and push on again. Here are wounded men sitting by the roadside or lying at full length on the grass. Some rise up and hobble painfully after us; others beg for water and fall to weeping. We cannot be burdened. We cannot even be merciful. We are the rear-guard—not here to save a hundred but thousands.

At the foot of the hill are two broken waggons, an ambulance with a wheel off, a heap of knapsacks and muskets thrown away by weary and fearful men; half-way up the hill more abandoned waggons and two or three dying horses; at its crest a caisson and more spoils for the enemy.

"Halt! Here we check them again!"

The guns are planted and the infantry positioned, and we can see that the highway clear back to the swamp is a mass of moving men. Thirty to one, perhaps, but we must fight. It is only when they overflow into the forest and field and are on our flanks that the guns are limbered up and we fall back. We have given them another heap of dead to bury, more wounded to care for; but, alas! we dare not stop to count our own loss.

Across a plain for half a mile, past a farmhouse and its barns and orchard, and the highway turns to the left and enters the forest. We halt at the turn. There is just time to draw a long breath when the head of the wild beast, scenting our bloody footprints, comes into view. Our shells scream down the dusty highway and mingle blood with dust. They rend, they tear, they maim and kill, but the living wall is not checked. Then grape and canister whirr and whistle and scream, and the muskets of our infantry blaze and crackle, but we cannot stem the tide. Even as we are ready to fall back, one of our guns is dismounted, and we must help the horses to draw away the other. There are more dead and wounded—only a skeleton command to stagger back and look for another position.

Here the highway leaves the woods and ascends a strong hill. The afternoon has waned, and the sun is disappearing. Half-way up the hill the last horse falls in his tracks, and we drag the gun and its caisson up by hand. It is our last stand. The army is safe and can ask no more of us. As we bind up each other's hurts, we can hear the foe cheering down the road. Five minutes later the last shell is fired. There is no more grape, no more canister. Gun and caisson are overturned into the ditch.

We hold the hill for ten minutes with a fire of musketry which leaps up against the evening sky like a great bonfire, and there comes a sudden silence. We have the order to retreat. Leaving the wounded to groan and pray, leaving the dead to grow cold as the red sunset fades away and the stars come out, we glide away like shadows into the night, and like shadows are swallowed up and lost to view.

We were fighting for night to come. It is here. The pursuit is ended.

RICHARD SIBERT.

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IGNATIUS BINKS, TRAGEDIAN.

He was a familiar figure at the Thespis Club, was Ignatius Binks—and a very impressive figure, too, in his own estimation. When you saw his card (and he always handed them out with a lordly air, from a dilapidated case) you would readily surmise the character of the man, even had you never seen him before in the course of your life.

There was something so absurdly comical in the combination of Ignatius and Binks, when the two names belonged to one individual, that you felt an irresistible inclination to smile the moment your eyes rested on them. Poor Ignatius! He was, if you credited *his* story, an unrecognised genius. If, on the other hand, you felt disposed to believe the statements of those whom he deemed worthy his notice—a waggish set—he was a "crushed tragedian," and had endured all the sneers and heartaches which that questionable term implies.

He had studied every character in Shakespeare, from the waiting lady in *Macbeth* to Hamlet, and of each character he had his own original conception. These conceptions, it may be said, were decidedly novel. Fortunately for the public, Ignatius never had an opportunity to air them on the stage.

One day he came home—his countenance betraying mingled sorrow, disgust and anger—flung himself into a chair, dropped his head into his hand, and looked pensive. Mrs. Binks, a bustling, common-sense little woman, who had formerly played minor parts in various companies, glanced at her liege lord and sighed. It might be mentioned, in passing, that Ignatius's passiveness and the sigh of his wife, were matters of daily occurrence in the Binks household. To-day, however, Ignatius appeared even more depressed than usual, and his wife said sympathetically: "Some new trouble?"

"Yes," he murmured wearily, "and each new trouble is an insult."

"What has happened?" the little woman asked.

"Happened!" thundered Ignatius furiously, rising from the chair after the method of a stage king. "This is what has happened! To-day I met Bagsby of the Gaiety, and he offered me a part in a new piece—a part of thirty lines—think of it, and in a farce-comedy. Thirty lines in an odious concoction which will be an outrage on an intelligent public! And I—well, fortunately my wrath did not appear on the surface—you know, Clara, my love, I am a believer in repressed emotion, and it was simply a merciful Providence which prevented me from strangling the presumptuous ignoramus on the spot."

Ignatius took six Hamlet strides across the apartment and would undoubtedly have taken more had not the space been unpleasantly limited. Then he turned suddenly, folded his arms, and with downcast head, murmured:

"That it should come to this! But"—with gaunt arm pointing towards the ceiling—"behind the clouds the sun waits to burst into splendour. Even so do *I* wait. Rest, quiet, my ambitious soul; your day will come—it *must!*"

Ignatius took six strides more which brought him to a dilapidated sofa, and thereon he threw himself in deep dejection.

"Binks, darling," said his practical better-half, "what salary did Bagsby offer you?"

"The beggarly pittance of one pound a week," groaned the disciple of Shakespeare, adding: "merciful heavens! how my soul cried out in direst agony at the insult!"

"What was your answer?" continued Mrs. Binks.

"Answer!" yelled Ignatius, again rising and assuming the attitude of a man about to quell a howling mob. "I spoke not to him in words. I merely *looked* at him—aye, gave him one searching glance, and then strode forth into the world, to forget my woes amid its bustling activity."

"Well, you did a very foolish thing," was the comment of Mrs. Binks.

"What would you?" responded Ignatius tragically. "Think you, I would have so degraded——"

"Listen, Binks," interrupted his wife. "One pound weekly will be a great blessing to us. Don't look at it so slightingly. Accept Bagsby's offer."

"But, Clara, my love," groaned her spouse pathetically, "think of it—a farce-comedy. Dost fancy I can bring my soaring soul to grapple with such rot?"

"You must, my dear," decided Mrs. Binks. "As I said before, accept Bagsby's offer, and wait patiently for the triumph which, I trust, the future will bring."

"But my soul, my artistic soul, rebels," moaned Ignatius.

"Let it rebel," answered his wife, "and conquer it. That will be a victory for you. Recollect, Binks, dear, that we are almost penniless, that we scarcely know where the next meal is coming from. Do you want your wife and child to go hungry?"

"Ah, Clara, good angel of my life," cried the crushed actor, throwing himself on his knees at Mrs. Binks' side, "you have suffered much for my sake. It shall be so no longer. You have asked me to make a sacrifice. I will make it. For the sake of you and our helpless little one, I will silence my proud soul, I will away at

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once to that infamous Bagsby. Let me not tarry a moment, lest my courage forsake me."

Ignatius seized his battered umbrella, straightened himself as if for a mighty effort, pointed theatrically towards an imaginary spirit, and muttered solemnly:

"Lead on, oh cruel fate. I follow thee!"

Then he was gone. He did not, however, go to Bagsby's. On the contrary, he went to a neighbouring public-house, took a seat in a secluded corner, ordered an inexpensive beverage, and as he drank it, much as a stage villain quaffs imaginary wine from a gilded wooden goblet, he gave himself up to reflection.

As an outcome of his meditations, he drew from an inner pocket a small roll of manuscript, and surveyed it disdainfully. It was the "thirty-line part" in the new piece. How came it in his possession? In this wise. He had really told Bagsby that he "would consider the matter," and he had taken the part to look it over. It will, therefore, be seen that he had not adhered strictly to truth in the conversation with his wife.

Ignatius's soul *had* revolted at Bagsby's offer, but he had acted wisely, nevertheless, foreseeing what the result would be if his wife discovered that he had declined an opportunity to earn a pound per week. Still, he could not lower himself to the level of farce-comedy without a strong protest. Hence the scene with Mrs. Binks.

Ignatius having finished his beverage and his meditations, returned the manuscript to his pocket, threw down a very small coin, with a magnificent air, and again sought the Binks hearthstone, vouchsafing to his wife only these words, which were spoken as if wrung from a tortured soul:

"Bagsby has had his hour of triumph. The part is in my pocket. Henceforth let me hide myself from those who have known me."

The first night of the new piece came, and Ignatius did all in his power to so disguise himself that his friends, if any were in the audience, should not recognise him. The mental torture which he endured while on the stage for his one brief scene is indescribable. He played a serious *rôle*, and yet the spectators persisted in laughing at his every word and move. It was wormwood, gall—the bitterest of gall—and when his duties for the evening were over he strode homeward with a countenance which, to one unfamiliar with his character, was indicative of murder.

"Clara, my love," he cried wildly, bursting in upon his wife, "hide me—hide me from my fellow creatures. Let the world not look upon me again. Oh, the agony, the humiliation I have endured this night. I was laughed at—actually laughed at, my loved one, by the audience. Aye, Ignatius Binks was laughed at! Oh, heaven! let me not think on't or I shall go mad!"

He took six strides forward, six back, flung his arms about wildly and threw himself upon the sofa.

"My love," said his wife joyfully, "I see it all. You have hitherto mistaken your line of business. You are a comedian."

Ignatius rose to his feet like magic, his eyes blazed, and his face wore a marvellous expression of contempt.

"A comedian!' he yelled in tones of awful disgust, "I might have expected such an insult from Bagsby, but scarcely from the lips of one who should have consoled me in the hour of my mortification. Madam, good-night!"

The next morning Mrs. Binks bought a penny paper, and looked over the criticism of the new piece. Alas! it was voted a failure, but her eyes danced as she read it. Ignatius had made a hit. The leading part, that of an erratic and impoverished author, referred to as a *rôle* of the strongest possibilities for an eccentric comedian, had fallen flat owing to the incompetency of the actor who had attempted to portray it. The criticism went on to say that with a proper representation of the principal *rôle* the comedy would undoubtedly prove highly successful. Mrs. Binks sighed. The piece was probably a failure, and in a couple of weeks Ignatius would again be out of an engagement.

A cry from the baby in the cradle caused her to drop the paper. She took the little one in her arms, and as she did so it moaned piteously. It had been ailing for some days, but had not seemed seriously ill until this moment. Mrs. Binks grew suddenly frightened at the pale face nestling against her bosom. She knew what was wrong. The child was suffering from lack of proper nourishment, lack of fresh air, lack of almost everything that such a tender life needed. The mother was powerless to remedy the ailments of her little one, and hot tears came into her eyes at the thought of her helplessness. A quick rattle of cab-wheels, stopping below her window, broke in upon her grief. Then there were hurried steps upon the stair, followed by an impatient knock at the door. She laid the child gently in its cradle and admitted the visitors. Great was her amazement to discover in them Mr. Bagsby and the author of the new play.

"Is this Mrs. Binks?" asked the manager blandly.

"Yes," returned the astonished woman.

"Where is your husband?" was the next question. "We must see him at once. He has made the hit in the new play, and I am prepared to make him a splendid offer. Our leading comedian has proved a fizzle, and to save the piece from failure, we must replace him at once. Mr. Binks is the only man for the *rôle*. Last night he proved himself an eccentric comedian of marvellous ability and we want him to study the principal character immediately, so as to appear in it to night. This is the opportunity of his life. Where is he?"

"I will send him to you," replied Mrs. Binks, talking as if in a dream.

She went to her husband, lifting the sick child in her arms before she left the apartment. Ignatius sat alone in a little room which he called his study, his face expressive of grave concern. His wife submitted Bagsby's proposition to him. He rose to his feet at its conclusion, drew himself up to his full height, and was about to plunge into a violent speech, when Mrs. Binks went to his side, and said gently:

"My dear, look at the baby's face. Our darling is dying for need of many things which only money can procure. Are you going to jeopardise her life by throwing aside this golden opportunity? Sacrifice yourself for the baby's sake."

Ignatius looked at his child's face, then he kissed the pale little cheeks, while tears stood in his eyes. He saw all the dreams of his life going from him. Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Cæsar and a dozen other immortal creations seemed wailing a last farewell to him, and in their stead he saw only a farce-comedy hero. The baby's face conquered, but it was pathetic after all. The death of an ideal is always so.

* * * * *

Ignatius saved the new piece. To-day he is well known as a delightful comic actor, and his bank account has assumed pleasurable proportions. He always feels, though, that he is in the wrong groove, and that cruel necessity deprived the stage of a brilliant tragedian.

HORACE LEFTWICH.

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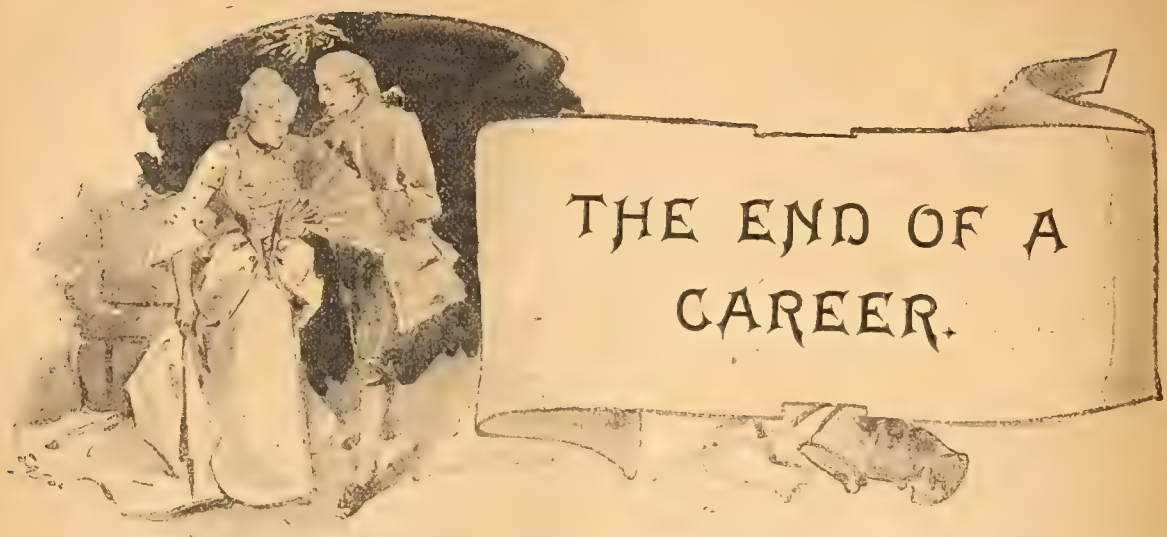

THE END OF A CAREER.

A MAN was sitting at his writing-table in some chambers at Pump Court, Temple, where he occupied two squalid rooms in the attics of one of the oldest and most dismal houses of that blighted quadrangle. The room was low and ill-lighted, and a great whitewashed beam, festooned with cobwebs, crossed the dirty ceiling from one end to the other. It was barely furnished, though the walls were covered with well-filled bookshelves, containing not merely standard works on law, but also a large number on philosophy and other miscellaneous subjects. There was as well, a fair proportion of the poets, and classical writers, both of dead and living languages. The carpet was faded and worn, while the curtains, rent and discoloured, hung limply over the streaky windows, which looked on to the gloomy houses on the opposite side of the court.

The man was leaning over the table with his head in his hands as though in pain. The photograph of a woman in a costly frame was before him, and also a pile of letters in a delicate feminine hand, which he had evidently been reading.

On the sideboard was lying, by an open case, a rusty gun, and two cartridges were on the hearth, as though put there to dry.

Presently he rose languidly from his seat, and, picking up the bundle of papers, went over to the fire and put them on the mantelpiece. Taking the letters one by one, he carefully read each through, and then thrust it into the grate. With some he did this hastily, as though anxious for their destruction; with others, and one especially, with lingering reluctance. As they were slowly consuming, his face grew paler and more careworn, and his features were drawn and contorted as though with some painful emotion. When all were burned he went back to the table, took up the photograph, and, going to the window, gazed at it long and earnestly. As he did so, his dim eyes filled with tears, and the great salt drops rolled down thick and fast; some fell upon the beautiful face of the portrait, blurring and disfiguring it out of all recognition.

At last, with a deep sigh, he raised it gently and reverently to his lips, and, again approaching the fire, put it hurriedly between the bars, as if he were afraid his resolution might relax, unless he acted without time for reflection. He watched it with hands clasped, and lips tightly pressed, as it first smouldered and shrivelled, and then burst into flame.

The fire soon dried the tear stains, and as it slowly sank into the glowing embers and the flames reached the face, the eyes of the photograph seemed, to his fevered fancy, to shine through the mist once more with almost living brightness, and its contraction, as it curled and shrunk under the influence of the heat, gave to the lips a wierd motion as though they were about to speak. With a half cry he tried to withdraw it, but it was too late; and in another instant it fell with a dying flicker into a hollow of the fire, and nothing but a piece of charred and blackened paper remained. He covered his face with his hands for a moment as he leant upon the mantelpiece, and then returning to his desk, took a pen and a sheet of paper and wrote as follows:

"When you get this, the last letter I shall ever write, I shall have taken that great leap into the dark, and solved those secrets of another world, on which we have so often speculated.

"During the last month—ever since my wife's death, in fact—I have felt the certainty of this day being close at hand, growing upon me with irresistible force, and I know now that the hour of my deliverance has come. It will hurt no one. I am quite alone. No tear will be shed on my dishonoured coffin: no mourner will follow it to the grave; and no stone mark my final resting-place.

"I did not realise at first that you intended to give me up so completely. You said we should be friends always, and that, if separated by necessity, you would write to me and give me comfort. But I fancy women do not regard a promise as so sacred that to break it is dishonourable. So, you see, it is the wisest thing I could do, as I can bear my desolation no longer. It is folly to struggle against the dictation of a natural impulse, which must be the surest guide in all matters beyond the ken of human reason. I have no more to say, only good-bye and may God for ever bless you! Remember the last words of a doomed man. In the hour of death, as in life, I love you, and if the soul is imperishable, so will my love also be eternal!"

He put the letter in an envelope, stamped and

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directed it in the careless, slovenly hand which was characteristic of the man. He then looked at his watch and, putting on his hat, went downstairs and out into the court, through the mouldering old archway, across the lane to the pillar-box opposite, into which, after looking again at the direction, he dropped his letter.

It was a raw February day, and he shivered as though the cold pierced him to the marrow.

An old beggar woman came shuffling down the lane in quest of some one careless or humane enough to purchase a half-filled box of damp matches. As he stood, looking up at the lowering sky, he at first paid no attention to her whining appeal. Then suddenly he seemed to notice her, and, struck more with her destitution than her deserts, put his hand in his pocket and drew out everything it contained. He did not count it, or even look to see what it was, but gave the whole handful of mixed coins to the bewildered mendicant.

He went slowly back to his dreary chambers, and as he entered them the clock at the Law Courts struck the hour of four. He sat down at his writing-table and emptied all its drawers of papers, glancing carelessly at some, but consigning most of them to the fire.

His eye fell on an old briar pipe on the mantelpiece, which he took up and regarded fondly, as though it were an old friend. Pulling a tobacco pouch from his pocket, which contained, however, only a little dust in the corners, he scraped what there was together, and, filling his pipe, lit it, and sat down in the old armchair to ponder dreamily for a few minutes, with his feet upon the fender.

Above the incessant roar of the two contending currents of street traffic, the discordant cries of the newsboys in the Strand were quite audible, though it was impossible to distinguish what exciting headline they were shouting. The smoker, after listening for moment, went to the window, and, opening it, learnt that the episode in the evening papers was the death of an eminent barrister in court. He smiled grimly to himself. "I wonder who it is?" he said. "I've half a mind to go out and get a paper just to see."

He felt in his pocket as though to extract the necessary copper, but, finding nothing, laughed and went on:

"That settles it at any rate. Well, well, he chose a better place and company to die in than I have; I wonder whose court it was in?"

He shut the window with a bang, and, after knocking out the ashes of his pipe, looked for the first time at the gun on the sideboard. It was a handsome breech-loader, though in a somewhat neglected state, as if it had not been used for some time. He took it up and put it to his shoulder two or three times as though aiming at some imaginary bird and exclaimed:

"How well it comes up. I don't believe there is a better-balanced gun anywhere, and it has done me some good service in its day, but never so good as on the last time I shall ever use it."

He slipped in the cartridges, and snapped the breech to, as calmly as he had ever done in field or covert. Then he stirred the fire into a cheerful blaze and sat down in the armchair again, with the gun across his knees. His hands played idly with the hammers, while he stared in a ruminating, dazed way at the leaping flames.

He looked at his watch. It was five minutes to five. Still he did nothing but glance from time to time round the room, as it was fitfully illuminated by the flickering firelight. There was a heavy mist outside, and it was already almost dark.

Presently the great clock in the Strand boomed out the first of the four quarters. He started slightly. His face was ashen white, but quite calm, although on his forehead there gathered a few drops of glistening moisture, as he pushed back the hair from his eyes. As the clock sounded the first stroke of the hour he turned the gun round with the muzzle close against his mouth. Then he waited, with his head thrown back and his feet carelessly crossed. His hand was quite steady and the gun never shook.

As the slow and solemn tones of the hour-bell tolled the knell of his unhappy union with the world, the time between each stroke seemed interminable. On the fourth his breath grew deeper and more hurried as he fixed himself with greater rigidity in the chair.

On the first vibration of the last stroke its full sound is lost in a loud report.

* * * * *

At about eight, footsteps are heard running upstairs. The outer door being shut, a paper is thrust into the letter-box, and the patter of feet again sounds on the stairs, gradually dying away in the dark and deserted court.

The next morning the door of the room was broken open.

The man's name was known, but there were no papers whatever to confirm his identity or throw any light upon his history. No motive for the deed was discovered.

An unopened telegram lying on the floor, passed into the hands of his landlady. It contained these words:

"You will have heard that my husband died this morning of heart disease in the Court of Appeal. Much upset. Will write soon."

There was no signature, and the landlady, who attached no importance to the words, consigned it to the fire.

That same day a woman was sitting alone glancing through the evening paper. She scanned through the mystery in the City, until she came to the name of the suicide.

Long afterwards she was found in a dead faint on the floor.

R. B.

A NEW SERIAL COMMENCES IN "SHORT STORIES"

dated May 23rd, and published on Tuesday, May 19th. It is called

"The Wythecombe Mystery,"

And is from the pen of Mr. JOHN K. LEYS, whose work is already known to readers of SHORT STORIES as the author of "The Tenth of June," and other tales.

THE STORY WILL BE ILLUSTRATED BY MR ST. MAR FITZGERALD.

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THE GHOST AT THE PRIORY

CHAPTER I.

Sir Simon Wynyard.

It was a wild winter's night. The strong westerly wind drove the heavy rain in gusts against the windows of the old Priory. The trees bent and swayed in the gale, their few remaining leaves torn off, flying and whirling through the air. In the old gardens the late marigolds and straggling mignonette gave up the contest in despair, and were beaten hopelessly; the chrysanthemums held down their dripping heads; even the purple pansies in the sheltered corner by the south wall had much ado to keep themselves from being broken into the wet earth by the heavy drops.

Even as the wind lulled, for a fresh outburst, the ear was aware of another sound above the roar of the storm—a steady, pulsing, unvarying rush—the husky voice of the mill-wheel as it strove at its task of grinding the wheat.

For how many generations had the mill-wheel worked? It had ground the bread of monks who once dwelt at the Priory, had seen those monks scattered abroad by Henry the Eighth, and the Wynyard family take their place. It had been turning the great mill-stones, and groaning at its task like a chained giant, when a horseman galloped along the road, and drawing rein on the opposite bank, shouted across to the miller the news of the sighting of the Armada. Still it strove, and worked, and sang when the Cavalier owner of the Priory fell at his own gate, struck down by a Puritan bullet; and later, when his Jacobite grandson lay hidden among the sacks in the mill while the soldiers searched the Priory for him in vain.

And, as the mill-wheel turned and turned through the years that followed, the broad lands beside the river passed into other hands, leaving but little for the descendants of Cavalier and Jacobite. Yet mill and Priory faced each other like faithful friends through all the changes, and the husky song of the turning wheel was the most familiar sound of life in every Wynyard's ears.

To-night the wheel toiled steadily through the storm, and in the darkness the pale pillar of white spray glimmered fitfully, and the fierce rain lashed the clots of foam floating away on the black water.

There were lights in the mill, and the fantastic shadows of the miller and his men wavered and flickered on walls and ceiling. There were also other lights gleaming here and there in the stormy darkness, and others still gleaming from the Priory windows, answering as it were the friendly beams from the mill. Further on were two cottages, then a small house, where the parish clerk lived, then the rectory, and the little church; these few dwellings made up the village of Lulham.

"It's a wild night!" said the miller, as a fresh gust swept past the mill, and drowned for a moment the groaning of the wheel; and that same thought must have fled over the river on the wet wings of the wind into the Priory drawing-room, where Mrs. Wynyard, the widow of the last owner, sat with her two daughters, for, as the gust tore through the garden, and shrieked against the panes, she sighed, and said, gently:

"It is a wild night!"

And Bridget, the younger, looked up from a book, adding, with laughing eyes:

"A night for Sir Simon to walk!"

"Don't, Bridget!" said her sister; "you make me feel quite creepy. I wish you would not speak of him."

"Don't you like feeling creepy? It is the only excitement we have in this place. What would Lulham be without Sir Simon? I'm proud to think that he was our ancestor—dear, wicked old thing! Now, Cynthia, confess that you, too, are proud of Sir Simon."

"No, I don't think I am. He was quite horrid!"

"Certainly, he shows a odd taste in preferring to walk abroad on stormy nights." This from Mrs. Wynyard.

"Oh, mother, wild weather is so much more picturesque and suitable for him," cried Bridget. "A ghost of Sir Simon's calibre needs a stormy night for his rambles. Moonlight ghosts belong to love tragedies."

Cynthia laughed.

"Bridget is learned in ghost lore."

The two sisters were much alike. Both, fair, blue-eyed, with a clear, fresh, wild-rose bloom. Cynthia's hair however, was a silken yellow, like coiled sunshine; Bridget's, a soft nut-brown. Both girls were lissom, willowy, altogether charmingly attractive, and their mother regarded them with pride and regret, for who would ever see their beauty while they remained in Lulham? and, alas! they were too poor to leave it.

Bridget held up her finger.

"Listen! I can hear the mill-wheel now. The wind has lulled for a moment. Will the spell hold Sir Simon under the wheel? Or has he escaped, and set off on his travels? Perhaps he is walking about the garden—his garden? Suppose he takes a fancy to call upon us—his descendants! Suppose ——"

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Here there came a sudden, thundering knock at the hall door, and Bridget—valiant, ghost-loving Bridget—thus interrupted, gave a loud scream.

"I wasn't frightened," she protested, recovering herself, and laughing, "only startled. That knock arrived just at the right minute. Who can it be?"

"It cannot be the carrier," suggested Mrs. Wynyard, doubtfully. "We have not ordered anything."

"I hope Jane will not open the door without putting the chain on," said Cynthia nervously, hearing the maid's footsteps in the hall.

Bridget sprang up.

"Why, Cynthia, you are quite pale! I'll see who our visitor is."

She looked back as she ran out of the room, adding:

"If it is Sir Simon, nothing will keep him out but a strong form of exorcism. Isn't there one in 'Ingoldsby'? Better get the book ready, Cynthia!"

The hall was wide, lofty, and full of shadows, being lighted only by a small lamp on a carved bracket. As Bridget's high heels click-clacked over the flags, the maid opened the heavy front-door; a strong gust blew in, and the lamp-chimney cracked and fell, extinguishing the light.

"Fetch another lamp, Jane, quick!" said Bridget, hastening to the door.

"It's a man, miss," replied the maid, in a stage whisper. "But he can't get in, whoever he is, for the chain's on."

"Really, I'm quite harmless," said a laughing masculine voice outside—a pleasant voice. "My name is Medlycott—George Medlycott. I am an Australian. My mother is an old friend of Mrs. Wynyard's, and wished me to call at the Priory when I passed through Lulham."

"I know your name very well. Mother will be delighted to see you," said Bridget, reassured by the voice, and trying to peer through the darkness. But the rain beat in upon her hair and face, and she could only see the dim outlines of a tall, muffled figure. "You must excuse your reception. We could not imagine anyone coming to see us on such a night."

Here Jane reappeared with another light, and the stranger, being admitted, glanced round with an air of pleased curiosity.

He was a tall, dark, young fellow, with bright eyes and a frank manner.

"I have heard so much of this old place," he said, apologetically, "I have often wished to see it. And you are Cynthia—or Bridget?"

"I am Bridget," leading him into the drawing-room. "Mother—Cynthia—this is Mr. Medlycott, from Australia."

Mrs. Wynyard's face brightened as she welcomed the young man. He was the son of her oldest friend and schoolfellow, and his presence carried her back to her girlhood's days, before sorrow and poverty had dimmed the brightness of her life.

"You are very like my old friend, your dear mother," she said. "I should have known you from the photograph she sent me of you."

"That is fortunate," he replied, smiling, "for, otherwise, you might think me an impostor. But I have brought credentials," pulling some letters out of his pocket.

"We took you for a ghost," said Cynthia, "the ghost of Sir Simon, who strolls about on stormy nights."

"Does he?" George Medlycott evidently took as much interest in ghosts as Bridget herself. "What for? I mean, what is his particular woe or crime?"

"Bridget will tell you; she is the family ghost-lover. I must see about supper. I am sure you want something to eat."

She slipped softly out of the room—Cynthia always seemed to glide about the house as noiselessly as a fairy—and the Australian's eyes followed her regretfully.

It was a quaint, oblong room into which Medlycott followed his hostess shortly afterwards; a cosy room,

There came a sudden, thundering knock at the hall door.

the firelight shining on deep-red hangings and many bookshelves, and gleaming on Cynthia's yellow hair as she stood by the table, lighting the crimson-shaded lamp.

"This is surely a part of the old Priory?" George remarked, looking up at the groined ceiling.

Cynthia turned her smiling blue eyes upon him.

"Yes, you are right. Tradition says that this was the Prior's parlour. The walls are so thick that you can scarcely hear the storm."

"The house grows more interesting every minute," and Medlycott surveyed the ceiling again as he sat down. "I don't know how I shall wait till to-morrow to begin exploring. Please put me in the haunted chamber, if there is one."

"There is no haunted room; but the cellars under the new part of the house have an uncanny reputation. The floors are paved, and the walls partially built with old tombstones—a kind of sacrilege, you see. And there is always a wind blowing there, however still the day may be. People say it is only draughts. It makes a curious sort of wailing chant, which a legend says is the monks singing masses for the souls of the dead."

"I shall enjoy hearing them. Are any of the inscriptions on the tombstones legible?"

"I don't know," Cynthia confessed, with a little, soft laugh, and a faint increase of colour. "You will think me very silly, but that chanting makes me feel so creepy that I have never stopped in the cellars a minute longer than I could help. Bridget has, though."

George laughed, a kindly, amused laugh, and said to himself that Cynthia's face was the loveliest he had ever seen with those summer-blue eyes, and that changing, wild-rose colour.

"Many of the inscriptions are quite clear, and very

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interesting," said Bridget, in answer to his glance of inquiry. "I've read heaps of them over and over again. I'll take you down there first thing to-morrow morning."

Cynthia.

"If this wind continues I should think the monk's chant will be a positive howl."

"Oh, no, the sound never varies in the least. It is always the same."

"Is it?"

Medlycott looked puzzled, and Bridget triumphant.

"Ah," she said, "you will soon be as scared as Cynthia. I am a most splendid ghost-cicerone. I will make your hair stand on end."

That was a merrier meal than had been eaten for a long, long time in the old Priory. Even poor Mrs. Wynyard, depressed by loneliness and poverty, felt her spirits grow lighter under the cheering influence of the Australian's presence. He seemed so buoyant, so happy, so thoroughly interested in them and their belongings.

Few people took any interest in the Wynyards. Cynthia's soft loveliness, and Bridget's brilliant beauty were weighty reasons why their parents' old friends should conveniently forget them. Handsome and portionless girls are apt to attract sons, and spoil daughters' chances.

Mr. Wynyard had died when his children were mere babies, died partly from anxiety caused by heavy money losses; and the girls had grown up in this secluded village, seeing no one. No wonder that this friendly stranger cheered the quiet household.

When they retired to the drawing-room, Bridget undertook to relate the legend of the family ghost.

"The wind is not quite so high," she cried, drawing back the heavy curtains from before the window. "You can hear the mill-wheel now."

And the steady, pulsing sound came clearly to Medlycott's ears through the hiss of the rain.

Bridget dropped the curtain, and drew a low chair close up to the fire.

"In the days of the Stuarts," she began, stretching out one small hand with a dramatic gesture—"lived our ancestor, Sir Simon Wynyard. He was a mean and cruel man. Rather than pay the new poor-rates, he pulled down all the cottages in Lulham save two, turning out the villagers in the depth of winter to find homes wherever they could. A great snowstorm came on, and many lost their way, and were frozen to death. But Sir Simon cared nothing, and the years went on. At last he died, I think, of some kind of ague, for in his illness he was constantly shivering. Nothing would keep him warm. Of course, people said that the cold of the frozen villagers had seized him—it was Heaven's vengeance. At the last moment he repented, and sent for a priest; but, as the holy father crossed the threshold, Sir Simon died—unshriven. Therefore, his spirit could not rest. When mass was said for his soul in the Priory chapel, on the eve of his burial, a great wind swept through the chapel, and extinguished the candles; and, that same night, Sir Simon was seen in the village, wringing his hands with loud cries of despair. After that, he constantly walked over the sites of the cottages he had pulled down, stopping at each one and lamenting. Then the Lulham people called upon the Protestant vicar to lay the ghost. It was intolerable that the slumbers of good Christians should be disturbed by the vain lamentations of a wicked spirit. The vicar consulted the bishop, who came to Lulham with a goodly following of clergy, and armed with the strongest possible form of exorcism. He solemnly laid the spirit of Sir Simon under the mill-wheel, granting him permission to walk about only on stormy nights, when his cries would be unheard in the roar of the wind."

Bridget stopped, and, in the momentary silence, the dull, even beat of the mill-wheel throbbed steadily through the whistling of the gale.

"Couldn't they consign the poor chap to Purgatory?" suggested Medlycott. "I should think that would have almost have been a more cheerful place of sojourn."

"They could not send him anywhere out of this world—there was the difficulty," replied Bridget, solemnly. "Of course, Sir Simon is abroad to-night. I was just telling Cynthia that, perhaps he would call upon us, when you knocked."

"And Bridget screamed," added Cynthia softly.

"Yes, I did," Bridget admitted; "but only because the knock startled me. It came so opportunely."

"I am sorry I attacked the knocker with such unnecessary vigour," laughed George. "I thought if it

"In the days of the Stuarts," she began.

didn't make a noise, you would never hear me in the storm."

They talked on till late, Mrs. Wynyard wishing to hear all news of her old friend, and the girls listening to the young man's glowing description of the Australian bush in Leichart's Land.

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CHAPTER II.

SIR JOCELYN'S TOMB.

THE next morning was clear and sunny, a golden November day. The river ran swollen between its banks, the mill-wheel churned heavily the turbulent volume of water that dashed through it, and foamed away to rejoin the river. In the Priory garden the chrysanthemums were trying to lift their rain-laden heads, and a robin sang on a leafless bough, as though the time were spring.

Before lunch, George Medlycott went round the village with Cynthia and Bridget, and into the old church, where many Wynyards lay side by side. The monuments fascinated the Australian, and, with the girls' assistance, he spelt out most of the nearly obliterated inscriptions on the tombs and brasses.

"We must come here again," he said, looking back as they passed out of the west door. "I have not half seen the place yet. Now for the mill-wheel. Whereabouts is Sir Simon deposited?"

"Just under the wheel," Cynthia pointed to the whirl of foaming water that rushed upward from beneath the churning wheel. "The bishop and clergy stood where we are standing now, and the wheel was stopped till the concluding words of the service, then it was turned on again."

"I should think the poor old boy must be thankful for a stormy night, when he can get out and take a walk. How mossy those stones are!"

Medlycott spoke of the sandstone blocks that held back the bank on either side of the wheel. They were of irregular shapes, and here and there tiny ferns, withered now, nestled in the crevices, and tufts of long, fine grass hung down, trailing in the swift rushing waters.

There was a cheerful stir about the mill. Fowls were pecking about; the miller, dusty with flour, came out for a moment, took off his hat to the Wynyards, looked curiously at the stranger, and went in again. Then the dog strolled out, barked and wagged his tail; the bark was for Medlycott, the tail wagging for his companions.

"The history of the mill is all mixed up with the history of the Priory," said Bridget. "I will tell you about it this evening after you have seen the house."

"And the cellars where the monks chant?" said George. "You see, I have not forgotten those cellars. I am expecting to make all sorts of discoveries there. I shall find out the cause of the chanting."

"No," Bridget shook her head emphatically, "you will not discover that."

"Bridget would be quite sorry if you did," laughed Cynthia.

November days, however fair, are short; therefore, lunch was no sooner over than Medlycott was taken by winding passages and down crooked flights of worn stone steps into the Priory cellars, Bridget leading the way, her sister and their visitor following.

"You will come, too?" George had asked. "I really am an efficient protector against a league of phantom monks."

And Cynthia had smilingly assented, saying she wished to observe the effect of the chanting on a stranger; though whether a less pleasant stranger than the Australian would have induced her to descend into those ghastly precincts is a matter of doubt.

They went down the last and most crooked of the steps, through an archway, into a wide, stone-flagged and stone-walled chamber.

Then Bridget stopped, and said:

"Hush!"

The sound that fell upon their ears, might have been mistaken for distant chanting. It might be described as a low, monotonous wail, rising and falling, yet not falling below a certain level of tone. It filled the chamber, and was heard equally from every part of it, yet it seemed to be far away.

They passed through another arched doorway into a chamber similar to the first, but rather smaller. Here, as in the other, the monotonous wail filled the air with its unceasing lament, just so loud, and no louder—just as far away.

"It is very singular," said George, looking around him with a puzzled expression. "I am not surprised at the belief in the monkish chanting. It is like the singing of many voices in unison."

"As when one stands outside a church, and hears the murmur of voices within." This from Cynthia.

"Yes, that is it. As the sound is the same in both cellars, I think it must be caused by a current of air passing exactly between them, either below the floor or above the ceiling."

"I suppose it must be something of that sort," said Cynthia as she glanced upward to the top of the archway; "but you cannot pull down the house to look!"

Bridget stopped, and said, "Hush!"

"And probably if I did, the act of pulling down would destroy the conditions necessary for the working of this mysterious Æolian harp, still, I do not acknowledge myself beaten. I may yet discover the cause."

"I am determined to believe in the monks," said Bridget gravely. "Now, look at the pavement and the walls. Here are whole histories for you."

She was right. Walls and floor were alike composed of gravestones, whole and broken, and carved fragments of monuments; the inscriptions clear and legible on some, on others defaced by time and carelessness.

"When most of the Priory was burnt," continued Bridget, "this new part was built as much as possible with the ruins of the old. The chapel roof fell in, and part of the walls fell, too, so a great deal of the chapel is here. Some of the monuments are from the church. I don't know why they should have been taken; but, in Queen Anne's days, people do not seem to have had much respect for antiquity, or anything. They simply helped themselves as appeared convenient."

"I never dreamt of anything half so extraordinary as this!" exclaimed Medlycott, going from one stone to another, and deciphering, with Bridget's assistance, the worn sentences thereon.

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Even Cynthia began to be interested, and, like her companions, wondered and guessed at the life-stories of the long-dead men and women, whose memorials were here so strangely packed away.

"This," said Bridget, pointing to a broken slab, "is part of the tomb of Sir Jocelyn Wynyard. He went to the Crusades with Edward the First, and, on his return, did great penance for some unknown crime, desiring that he might be buried plainly in the Priory chapel, with no effigy such as was usually sculptured of a Crusader. You see, he beseeches all people not to remember him by his 'defaulte.' I wonder what his 'defaulte' was."

Medlycott slowly read the curious old spelling.

"Pray you alle. Praye for the soule of Jocelyne Wynyarde Knyght whyche departed out of thys world the iii daye July the yere of our Lord MCCLXXXIV. (illegible) whyche cors was layd in a faire chest (illegible) stone afore the west door. Remembre not myn defaulte myn orgultye and myn (illegible) onlie myn dolorous deth and repentynge. On myn soule God have mercye. . . ."

Beneath the inscription was a rough carving, somewhat resembling a cross-barred grating.

"I have often wondered whether that portcullis carved beneath the words bears any reference to the crime. Perhaps it is meant for a prison grating, not a portcullis," said Bridget.

Medlycott stooped down to examine the carving more closely.

"It is of much later date than the epitaph. You can tell that by the comparative clearness and sharpness of the cutting. It is not obliterated anywhere, as many of the words are."

Bridget looked.

"I never noticed that before."

Cynthia looked, too, over her sister's shoulder.

"But why," she asked, "should that portcullis, or whatever it is, have been added long after? And it is unfinished. Some of the spaces have knobs in them, others not."

"Very odd. I don't understand it," Medlycott spoke, slowly, reflectively. As you say, it may represent a grating—a grille. "Ah!"—a light seemed to break upon him—"perhaps that is it! A grille! Where is a piece of paper?"

He pulled several letters out of his pocket, and, unfolding them, tried them on the carving. They were far too small to cover it.

Both the sisters had stood for a moment bewildered. Then Bridget exclaimed:

"I understand! I will fetch some drawing paper!"

She ran off, and Cynthia turned to the Australian.

"What is it you are going to do? What is a grille?"

"This carving," he explained, touching the graven stone, "this that we have been calling a portcullis, may, I think, have been intended to point out certain words of the inscription. There are, as you noticed, knobs in most of the squares formed by the crossing lines. Only a few of the spaces, perhaps, fit to words of the epitaph. So I propose to put paper over the carving, trace it, cut out the blank spaces, and then fit the paper over the epitaph. Then we shall see if my surmise is correct."

"But if the carving is of much later date than the inscription, as you thought—and, indeed, it looks newer and fresher than the letters—how can it have anything to do with Sir Jocelyn's epitaph?"

George looked puzzled again.

"True; that certainly goes against my theory, Yet I can hardly believe that the sculpture has been accidentally left unfinished. The more I look at those spaces, the more they appear to have been left blank on purpose. Still, this may be mere fancy."

"No, no! I'm sure there is a wonderful discovery in it," cried Bridget, arriving breathless, and overhearing the last words. "We shall find Sir Jocelyn's history, or a hint of it. Here are pencils and scissors, and I've brought a whole roll of drawing paper."

The tracing was quickly made, the blank squares carefully marked and cut out, the paper placed over the worn, half-defaced sentences, when, through the cut-out spaces, appeared the words:

"The iii . . . stone . . . afore the west door."

"What can it mean?" ejaculated Cynthia.

"The third stone before the west door?" repeated Bridget. "That means the chapel door, because Sir Jocelyn's tomb was in the chapel, a raised tomb. This slab was the end of it."

Medlycott removed the paper, and once more the words stood out:

"The iii . . . stone . . . afore the west door."

He sprang up.

"Shall we examine this third stone? Where is the chapel?"

"The chapel is in ruins. It was burnt at the fire, you know. How unfortunate!" and Cynthia clasped her hands.

George's face fell. He was feeling the ardour of an antiquary and explorer combined, and a check was trying.

"But the pavement is there," interposed Bridget, "and part of the walls still standing, and the west doorway, though the door is gone. I am sure we can find the stone."

The chapel was picturesque in its ruin. The roof was gone, and of the walls only the north and west were standing, and these were partially destroyed. But ivy had crept about, and lichen and wallflowers had found a footing here and there, and through the great arch of the west doorway one looked across the slope of the garden on to the shining river and the old mill. The monotonous drone of the wheel was filling the air as Medlycott and the two girls counted and re-counted the mossy slabs beneath their feet.

"One—two—three! I am sure this is the third stone that is meant. It is in a direct line from the middle of the doorway."

"But, Bridget, the stone might be the third sideways, against the wall, you know—this one;" and Cynthia touched a cracked slab with the tip of her shoe.

"Or this one," said George, indicating a third stone, exactly opposite Cynthia's, "unless a third stone in the wall was meant."

This was a new idea. They scanned the massive archway and its adjoining walls with eager eyes.

"There are dozens of third stones in the walls, taking both sides," said Bridget dolorously.

"Well, suppose we begin with the pavement, as we have not much choice there," suggested Meddlycott. "Where can I find tools?"

"There is a spade in the corner. Perhaps that will not do?"

"It might; I'll try. At which stone shall I begin?"

"At Bridget's, I think," said Cynthia; "after all, I believe she is right."

The rain and dew and frost of a century had made many a crack in the once smooth pavement, and

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emerald blades of grass had sprung up in those crevices forcing up the loosened stones, so that Medlycott found little difficulty in raising the slab.

"There is nothing!" exclaimed Cynthia; "only the wet earth. Look, Bridget!"

"We may find something if we dig," said George, pausing with the stone half raised. "Will it matter if I throw this over and perhaps break it?"

"Not in the least. Why, nearly all the stones are broken already."

The slab fell over with a thud, unbroken; and George began digging cautiously.

The spade struck something that gave out a sharp click. What was it?

He carefully moved away the dark, moist earth—the girls watching with breathless interest—and brought out a small, covered metal goblet. The lid was difficult to open, so rusted was it by its long interment in the damp earth.

Within was a roll of discoloured leather, out of which fell a narrow strip of parchment, closely written.

Medlycott picked it up and handed it to Cynthia, saying smilingly:

"I must not pry into family secrets."

"I am sure it does not matter," she replied. "Besides, the writing is so faded I can hardly read it. Can you, Bridget?"

Bridget looked over her sister's shoulder, and slowly read aloud:

"On the twentieth day of February, in this unhappy year of 1643, wherein I have seen Sir Peter Wynyard slain by his own gateway, and his only son driven out of England by ungodly men; I, Anselm, Priest, thinking that no longer could I with safety retain the jewels and monies intrusted to my care by Sir Peter, did, with the ayde of the miller, John Fenn, put all the said jewels and monies into an iron boxe, and did conceal the said boxe in the earth, behind the stone which is in shape somewhat like a heart, on the right side of the banke, by the mill-wheel. This I did, seeing that the mill-stream did seem to be the one only place of security, so that the miller, John Fenn, could always faithfully overlook the place. But this I write by reason of the sudden and lamentable death of that worthy man and good friend, the miller. For that I cannot wholly trust his son, I herewith have sent to France, by a faithful brother, that he should enjoin the young Sir Simon to study well the tomb of his ancestor, Sir Jocelyn, for thereon have I written a message which it behoves him to look unto. But if, by any evil chance, it happen that Sir Simon return not, it is my hope that some of the family may be led so to note the message on the tomb, and thus be led to discover this which I write, and so regain that which I have secured from the grasp of the evil-doers."

Bridget paused and gasped.

"It can't be true!"

"Why not?" asked George. "We'll look. It would be grand to find that box. Have you read all?"

"There follows a list of the things hidden. I wonder if they are as valuable as they sound. Here they are," and Bridget read out the names of the treasures, which included several gold church ornaments of immense value.

When her sister had finished Cynthia glanced at the displaced slab. "Don't you think that stone ought to be put back? Of course, the chapel is ours; but, perhaps, it is well not to excite any curiosity as to what we have been doing, and the maids come here sometimes."

Medlycott agreed as to the wisdom of this, and smoothing the earth, restored the slab to its former position; after which, the three carried their great news to Mrs. Wynyard.

"Think, mother! we shall be rich if this box is found," murmured Cynthia's soft tones; "and all owing to Mr.

Bridget looked over her sister's shoulder.

Medlycott. Now, how shall we get the box? I am longing to see whether it is really there or not. I feel quite nervous about it!"

"The miller would stop the wheel, I am sure," said Cynthia; "he is a very good-natured man. Then some one would have to wade in, unless the stone can be reached from the top of the bank."

"That some one would be me," said Medlycott. "What a singular thing it is that the miller who helped to conceal the box should have died! Had he lived, you would never have heard of the treasure. He would have told his heir on his return. By-the-way, is that Sir Simon the ghost?"

Bridget nodded.

"Yes, he's the ghost. When the Puritans killed his father, he escaped to France, and came back at the Restoration."

"Everyone who knew the secret seems to have died," Cynthia remarked thoughtfully; "the miller, the priest, and the priest's messenger. Had they lived, Sir Simon would have got the treasure; then, perhaps, he might not have turned out the villagers."

"And not have been a ghost doomed to keep the box company under the mill-wheel," said Medlycott. "I fancy the proximity of that box must rather annoy him. He must be continually reflecting on the uses to which he could have put its contents."

Mrs. Wynyard had been reading the strip of parchment. She now laid it down, and said:

"I'm afraid, girls, that even if the box is still by the

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mill-wheel, we should have some difficulty in claiming the ownership."

"But there's the evidence!" Medlycott pointed to the parchment.

"I am not sure of the law in these matters," she continued. "The land on which the mill stands does not now belong to the Wynyards. It did once, but was sold about fifty years ago. I fear the box could be claimed as treasure-trove by the present owner of the soil."

"Impossible!" ejaculated the Australian. "I, too, am ignorant of the law here, yet that parchment appears to me conclusive."

"Yes," hesitatingly; "but we should be obliged to prove our claim, and litigation is so expensive."

"Sooner than put all these lovely things into a lawyer's pocket, I'd leave them where they are!"

And Bridget's sentiments were fully shared by the others.

"One may surely steal one's own property," said Medlycott, after a pause. "I will steal this box for you. I am certain I can manage it. The wheel stops on Sundays, of course. I will go at dusk."

Cynthia looked doubtful.

"I'm afraid the miller and his family would see you. The house is so close to the mill. Also all the village—if Lulham can be called a village—is more alert on Sundays. People have nothing to do but to notice their neighbours, and, naturally, anything unusual would attract their attention more readily than on any other day. There are, including ourselves, just twenty-seven human beings in Lulham, and the mill-wheel being such a feature of the place, the twenty-seven pairs of eyes often glance towards it. I fear Sunday evening is not a very good time for exploring."

"On week days the wheel often works till quite late, and there is a tiresome moon now," finished Cynthia, as a climax to the various difficulties she had enumerated.

"The moon will wane," said Bridget oracularly, "and I really believe, Cynthia, that if we had another of our family ghost nights like last—I mean one of Sir Simon's favourite dark and stormy nights—Mr. Medlycott might search by the mill-stream for hours, and never be noticed by anybody. If anyone did catch a glimpse of him, they would think it was Sir Simon and run away."

"The river is swollen on stormy nights," objected Cynthia.

"But not the mill-stream. When the wheel is still, that is quiet and shallow enough for anyone to wade in if they wish."

The Australian was deep in thought. Mrs. Wynyard sat studying the parchment. There was a minute's silence.

"I have it!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "I will be mistaken for Sir Simon. I will wait for a dark night, and I will go down to the mill-stream dressed as Sir Simon. Have you any old coats of that period? If not, I'll run up to London and get one. Then, if I am accidentally seen, I shall be merely a ghost taking his usual exercise."

"Splendid," cried Bridget. "Mother, have we any old clothes of Sir Simon's time?"

"Not of so early a date as that; but in the blue garret I think there are some of the time of the first George, or, perhaps, of Anne. Will not these be quaint enough, if you really mean to try this scheme, George?"

Mrs. Wynyard smiled on the young man as she spoke. She liked him, and, therefore, was ready to fall in with any idea that he suggested; but this notion seemed to her a mere freak of youth. It might, she thought, amuse him and the girls. As for the box, she did not believe it was there. Doubtless, it had been removed by the priest, and squandered by Sir Simon.

"Oh, yes, I shall certainly try, Mrs. Wynyard," Medlycott replied. "The very first stormy night will see me personating your family ghost, if you will pardon the liberty?"

"You had better ask Sir Simon to excuse you," said Bridget, laughing.

"Suppose we should see both of you, the real and the sham ghosts, walking together up the garden? Ugh! how deliciously horrid!"

"I wish you had no such creepy fancies!" But, notwithstanding her protest, Cynthia laughed with the others.

They were merry enough, too, when they trooped up to the old blue garret, startling the spiders, and disturbing the dust of years.

"Why haven't we come up here long ago, Cynthia?" Bridget made this remark in meditative surprise as they opened ancient trunks and pulled out garlands of bygone days.

"I did come once, but there seemed to be nothing very pretty. I did not look in all the boxes, though. This is a smart coat!" holding up a mulberry-coloured satin that goldsmiths might have worn.

"Won't that do? Suppose I try it on?"

Medlycott threw off his own coat, and struggled into the mulberry satin. It had been made for a smaller man than the Australian.

"When I begin digging for that treasure," he remarked, giving a pull to the lapels, "this gorgeous garment will split across the back!"

"That will not matter," said Cynthia. "You are supposed to be Sir Simon, and it will not be wonderful if his clothes show signs of wear, considering that he has walked about in them for more than two centuries."

"And in such weather!" chimed in Bridget, and their laughter rang through the old attic, little used to such merriment.

"If I had a hat of some odd sort, I should do," pursued George, surveying himself in a cracked mirror. "On a dark night nobody will notice my nineteenth-century waistcoat and trousers."

Bridget rummaged in the old trunk.

"There must be a hat somewhere! Oh, yes! here is a red one, three-cornered, and turned up with gold lace!"

"The very thing!" Medlycott put it on. "Now I am complete!" He regarded himself in the mirror with much satisfaction. "Had I not better take this brilliant attire to my own room, ready for the first stormy night?"

"Take care the servants don't see the things," Cynthia warned him, "or your ghostship will be discredited."

"I'll lock them up. I wish we knew the Finnish charm for rain and wind; we would get up an especial storm. I'll find that box, if I spend whole nights in the mill-stream in company with Sir Simon."

CHAPTER III.

The Treasure.

Nearly three weeks elapsed before Medlycott could put his idea into execution—three weeks of mild, sunny weather; spent by the Wynyards and their guest in joyous wanderings about the country during the short golden days. And how happy the long, cosy evenings

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were! Poor Mrs. Wynyard brightened visibly under the stimulus of the young man's presence.

"How dull we shall be when you are gone!" Bridget exclaimed one day.

"Not at all," he promptly responded, "I mean to take all three of you back with me. I have arranged the programme. I find that hidden treasure; I wait till you have settled matters, then you come on a long, long visit to my mother, and probably you end by remaining altogether in Australia."

It was not the first time he had said this, smiling confidently. Mrs. Wynyard would smile, too, but shake her head. Bridget was quite ready to go, but doubtful as to whether she would remain. Cynthia made no comment, yet the Australian did not seem abashed by her silence; rather the reverse, for her sister observed that he addressed his remarks more particularly to Cynthia than to the others.

At last came a dark night, with gusty showers, and Medlycott announced his intention of setting off as soon as the sound of the mill-wheel ceased. He had carefully noted the stones built in the bank on the right of the wheel, and was sure he had detected the one "in shape somewhat like a heart," and would be able to find it in the dark.

The mill-wheel ceased its song at seven o'clock that evening; but Medlycott resolved to wait till Lulham had gone to sleep.

It was nearly eleven when, attired in the mulberry satin coat and gold-laced cocked hat, and carrying a spade and mattock, he stole out of a side door into the shrubbery path leading to the river.

"How it rains! do take an umbrella," whispered Cynthia.

Whereupon both he and Bridget burst into smothered laughter, restrained lest their mirth should attract the notice of any chance wayfarer.

"Am I not incongruous enough already?" he whispered back. "I'm the ghost of a roystering cavalier, dressed in a Victorian shooting suit, a coat of Queen Anne, a hat that might have been worn by Butcher Cumberland, and I am carrying a mattock and spade. Must I add an umbrella?"

He disappeared in the darkness, still laughing, and the girls returned to the Prior's parlour, where Mrs. Wynyard sat by the fire, prophesying failure.

The night was not particularly cold; the west wind was mild, despite its violence. It rushed shrieking through the trees and whistled and moaned over the river.

Medlycott glanced back as he crossed the little bridge. There was no light in any house, save that gleaming from the Priory. He looked up at the mill, it was dark and silent; the miller's house dark likewise. Here, at his feet, was the great wheel, quiet now in one of its brief pauses from labour; here, also, was the soft lapping of the checked stream, so different from the swollen rush of the river at his back.

He let himself cautiously down into the water, it was not deep, he had ascertained that. Not daring to strike a light lest the glimmer should be observed, he felt, for the heart-shaped stone, and proceeded to dig it out of the bank. Owing to the darkness, his progress was slow. By-and-bye, he heard the church clock strike twelve. Steadily he worked on; the stone was becoming loose. He dug harder; the fragments of earth slipped down into the water; then a heavier splash, and the stone was gone!—lying at his feet in the stream.

He felt in the hole; there seemed to be nothing but earth. Carefully he put in the spade, it struck something hard—metallic; and in a minute or two more, Medlycott had dug out a square, heavy box. He could scarcely refrain from uttering a shout of triumph as he clambered out of the mill-stream.

His head and shoulders were just rising above the

They opened the ancient trunks.

bank, when he was startled by a yell of affright from the bridge, and saw in the dim light a boy running wildly back towards the village.

Wondering what could have brought the lad out so late, George took to his heels with as much alacrity as the boy had done, and ran across the bridge into the Priory grounds as hard as he could, fearing the shout had roused the miller's family.

The side door had been left unlocked, and he and a gust of wind and a shower of rain drops all burst in together.

"Well!" cried the girls in concert, rushing out of the Prior's parlour to meet him.

"I've got it!" holding out the box triumphantly; "and as I was scrambling out of the stream a boy on the bridge raised a blood-curdling yell, enough to wake the whole place; so I've had to run for it!"

"And you are so wet!" exclaimed Cynthia, perceiving that he was already standing in a little pool that had dripped from his garments.

"I'll give this to Mrs. Wynyard, and then change my clothes. I'm not fit to come into a room."

Mrs. Wynyard's astonishment on beholding the box—a real, tangible iron box—was extreme; but after the first moment's amazement, she recovered herself, and said:

"How clever and good of you, George! I fear however, it will be found empty. That man whom the priest did not trust—the miller's son—you know, probably emptied it and replaced it."

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The girls' faces elongated; but Medlycott said cheerfully:

"It is too heavy to be empty, Mrs. Wynyard."

"Ah," lugubriously. "Then he filled it with brickbats. Do go and put on dry things, George, or you will be ill. There is some hot coffee ready for you."

He laughingly protested against the brickbats, and disappeared upstairs, while the girls debated the question of brickbats versus jewels.

"To find a treasure is too good to happen to us." Yet even as she uttered these gloomy sentiments, Mrs. Wynyard's face gleamed with a faint hope that the rusted box might contain release from the poverty which kept her daughters hopelessly immured in Lulham Priory.

She clasped her hands tightly when Medlycott returned and applied himself to opening the chest. Inside, in bags, and wrappings, were the money and jewels of the good priest's list.

"Now, who was right?" asked Medlycott. "No brickbats here, Mrs. Wynyard! Here are the two thousand angels," pouring the coins out on the table.

"And the standing-cup of gold," said Bridget, pulling off its coverings.

"And the gold image of St Katherine garnished with three sapphires and thirty-seven pearls," said Cynthia, holding up the statuette. "Mother, are they not lovely? What a pity that we must sell all these things."

Perhaps it was a pity, but one must be wealthy to retain such jewels for the mere pleasure of looking at them. The contents of the box realised over five thousand pounds; a sum sufficient, added to what they already possessed, to give the Wynyards that key to the outer world which they so much desired. Henceforth, they were not obliged to live in Lulham; and as though Fortune must needs give with both hands, it occurred to a wealthy man that the Priory, being situated within reach of two packs of hounds, would suit him as a hunting-box. Whereupon he bought it; and the money, though not a large sum, made a further and welcome addition to the Wynyards' income.

George Medlycott helped to settle all these matters.

"What can I do to express our gratitude to you?" said Mrs. Wynyard to him one bright February morning. "You have been like a son to me."

"That is what I wish to be," he replied, smiling. "Cynthia has promised to return to Australia with me. We hope to persuade you and Bridget to accompany us."

Again was Mrs. Wynyard boundlessly astonished—delightedly amazed.

"Did you know anything of this, Bridget?" she asked her younger daughter, when they were alone.

"Of course, mother. I saw it from the first. Cynthia wishes to be married at Lulham church. There will be just time for the wedding before we leave the Priory."

The village, consisting of the inhabitants of the two cottages, the mill, the rectory, and the clerk's house, was much excited by the news of Cynthia's engagement, and the Wynyards' intended departure.

"Ah," said the miller to Bridget, "we'll be sorry to lose ye; but we might ha' known ye were bound to leave the place afore long. One bad night in December, Joe Tyler's lad wur coomin' to my missus past midnight fur to borrow peppermint cordial fur his grandam, when he see Sir Simon as plain as life, arising from under the mill-wheel, wheer he wur laid, as ye know, Miss Bridget. Th' lad wur that scared he run whoam, an' his father had to coom fur th' peppermint instead. An' the next morn a big stone wur gone out of the bank theer"—the miller pointed to the right of the splashing wheel—"leaving a big hole, too! I got it up, and put it back, thinkin' it wur accident. But I see now it wur Sir Simon a-burstin' out, ready to go wi' ye. That's what it wur, Miss Bridget; he wuldna' be left behind, no matter how tight they'd laid him. Though I'd an idea he wur right under the wheel," added the miller reflectively; "but happen he wur bound to coom out sideways loike."

Which speech of the miller's gave Medlycott extreme delight when Bridget repeated it to him.

So the belief lingers in Lulham that Sir Simon broke his ghostly bonds to accompany his descendants to Australia, where Cynthia Medlycott sits in a verandah, heavy with stephanotis and bougainvillea.

Mrs. Wynyard lives with the Medlycotts; but Bridget has married the great traveller, Kent Laidlaw, and they have set off to explore the ruined cities of some of the South American countries.

"I do not believe, George," says Cynthia to her husband, "they will ever find anything so exciting as that grille you discovered on Sir Jocelyn's tomb."

C. L. A.

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RURAL HEROES.

A Story of the Franco-German War.

FROM THE FRENCH OF LABARRION.

CHAPTER I.

JEAN PEGOLAN, owner of a farm in the village of Eyvettes, is in high good humour this evening.

About him the dry leaves are dancing in the melancholy autumn wind and the sun is darting long, reddish rays through the bare boughs; above, the sky is blue as blue can be; and from the woods rises a pungent, aromatic odour. Jean Pegolan, sentient through his tough hide, of some small part of all this poetry, this serenity of nature, whips up the grey with a will and turns her head homeward.

It is quite true, to be sure, that the Prussians are marching on Paris, that here they have sacked a village, there burned a farm to the ground, and further on shot some poor, inoffensive creatures dead. But, I ask you, what difference can that possibly make to Jean Pegolan? Neither his house, nor his cattle, nor his crops, have suffered in the least from the invasion. He saw some of the enemy at the neighbouring town, where he has just been to sell some of the produce of his farm, and, dear me, he has not found that they are such monsters. They are men like any others.

When he has passed the Green-Cross and sees the village before him, with its church steeple of grey slate and the gilt weather-vane shining in the sunset, our honest farmer has a vision of the steaming dish of soup which awaits him on the table at home, that brings the water to his mouth.

"Hi! Get up!" But instead of "getting up" the grey comes to a sudden standstill.

A Prussian estafette, in passing, has seized her bridle, and sharply turns her out of the way. Then as Pegolan is too slow in making room, he raises his whip and slashes it across the farmer's face, from ear to ear.

Certainly, Jean Pegolan has always expressed the greatest respect for the conqueror, but, this time, rage gets the better of him. He rises to his feet, seizes one of the benches of the cart and the Prussian rolls off his horse the next moment, with a broken skull.

The shadows are growing deeper across the road, the woods are very still, the moon is creeping up the horizon half-hidden behind a transparent veil of clouds.

Pegolan, who is now trembling in every limb, looks furtively about him. No one has seen the deed. His Prussian lies there in the ditch, kicking convulsively, face downwards. As for him, he will assuredly tell no tales!

"Come, get up! Hi!"

And the grey starts off at a gallop.

CHAPTER II.

THEY have all been pushed and locked into the church like a flock of sheep. There they are, sitting in groups in the nave, some very pale, others very red, all silent, their throats contracted by fright. A crude white light falls from the windows of unstained glass and throws large pale squares on the peasants' blue frocks or illumines pitilessly some faces upon which abject fear may be read in the drawn mouth and pinched nostrils. In the back of the sanctuary, over the altar, with an unlit taper on either side, a large plaster crucifix hangs—the tortured limbs stretched and racked, the outspread arms seeming to implore pardon and pity for all. Faint heavy odours of autumnal foliage come from the neighbouring cemetery, and one hears the chirping of the sparrows disputing among themselves amidst the gravestones.

The night before, a Prussian patrol had found, near the Green Cross, the body of a murdered soldier. It is necessary to make an example. And so, since dawn, a battalion of *chasseurs* have invaded the village and, by order of the commanding officer, have imprisoned within the church walls every able-bodied man in the community. That morning—until the stroke of noon—has been given them to point out the guilty one or to make personal confession; that hour has passed, one of the men will be picked out at random, and the village burned.

And now it is 11.30 o'clock.

Oh! If they only knew the murderer, the assassin, the bandit, who has brought all this upon them, while they were vegetating along tranquilly in the midst of the ruins of their country, how gladly and quickly would they, good people, denounce him! If necessary they would wreak vengeance upon him with their own hands. But they do not know him; and meantime the minutes hurry on, and none dare take the initiative, none assume the responsibility of singling out the criminal.

He who could solve their perplexities, who might cry: "I am the murderer, the assassin, the bandit!"—he, Jean Pegolan, is very careful not to breathe a word.

He sits in the shadow of the confessional, with his sealskin cap drawn over his eyes and his heart beating wildly within him, and thinks of his wife, who is so dainty and so kissable; of his cows, who are comfortable in their stalls; of his hay, all well stowed away in his lofts, and he tells himself that to die would be to leave all that to all eternity, that one only dies once, that he would be very much of a fool to give himself up to justice, and that after all, he never killed the Prussian intentionally. The reasonings suffice to quiet his conscience. If the choice happens to fall on an innocent man—well, my faith, it cannot be helped. Everyone's surely bound to look after himself in this base world.

Hark! the clock, a quarter to twelve. Only a quarter of an hour left.

The last stroke dies away in slow vibrations and silence hangs again under the high vaulted ceiling like some invisible presence. The heavy rhythmic tread of troops approaching, then stopping, sounds from without. A hoarse cry of command, next, multitudinous guns strike the ground, with a dull thud.

A decision must be reached—and at once.

Some one speaks a name—in a whisper only—yet everyone heard it.

Then, hastily, hurriedly, with the feverish eagerness of people who dread death, everyone repeats it. Jean

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Pegolan, the Eyvettes farmer, draws a long breath. The name is not his.

It is that of a poor devil, half-woodcutter, half-poacher, a Red Republican, who voted a "nay" at the last elections.

He has a sick wife and three little children, the eldest of whom can but barely walk, and these will be left without bread by his death. But that cannot be helped. Perhaps the fellow did not do the deed. But then he was quite capable of doing it. Besides, he is only a poor wretch, while they are all comfortable farmers, in easy circumstances. Justice above all things.

In vain does the poor wretch protest his innocence. The evening before, he was ailing—a wrench he got in felling a tree. He had been on his bed without stirring, all day. They could make inquiries. They would see he had not been out of his house. All in vain does he throw himself at their feet, his voice choked with anguish and fear. All in vain does he invoke their pity. What is to become of his children if he is to die? His wife will never be equal to the task of providing for them.

No one answers. Pegolan, in his corner, sits in a cold perspiration, fearing some change of opinion, some sudden relenting. But the others are only too happy to have come to some conclusion. They ask but one thing now, to be speedily rid of this man who moans before them, tearing his hair, and reproaching them for their ferocious egotism, their monstrous cruelty.

The door is thrown wide open and beyond it rises a forest of bayonets filling the small square, and nearer to the threshold the group of men charged with the execution have gathered, and the fatal instrument of death shines again in the warm, white light of noon.

And twelve o'clock strikes.

There is a cry broken by a detonation, and the smoke clearing away, the body of the woodcutter and poacher is seen lying on the steps of the church, and stiffening there, while one by one those men pass out beside it, the blood staining the soles of their feet. And the Prussian officers, with looks of speechless contempt, turn away revolted.

CHAPTER III.

Jean Pegolan has gained his own abode once more.

Heavens! But it is pleasant to be safe at home again after such an adventure! The chickens are clucking and scratching about in the barnyard, the pigeons are cooing on the roof, the ducks are waddling around a tiny pond that shines softly in the sun; from the stable, where the Prussians have not entered, comes the mellow lowing of the milch cows, and the grey's strident neighing forms a response. Sheaves of wheat are piled up with a golden luxuriance, in the coach-house, and the hay in stacks, shows at all the windows of the loft.

The farmer shakes himself; his clothes are still moist with perspiration. He enters the house and sees his wife in tears on her knees beside the bed. She starts up at the sound of his step, and stands before him, white as a spectre.

"What!" in a shrill voice. "You are not dead?"

Pegolan, stunned by this reception, stares mutely.

"It was you who killed the Prussian at the Green Cross! Don't deny it! I saw the blood on your blouse this morning!"

"Sh!—sh! It's true—but—don't denounce me, for pity's sake!"

"Ah!" cried the woman with unutterable disgust. "You needn't be afraid now! You know it's too late, and you have allowed another man to be shot in your place!"

"It isn't my fault, is it? I didn't say anything. It was the Mayor who picked out the other one."

"So! Well, do you know what, Pegolan? You're a blackguard! Good-bye!"

Pegolan lets himself drop into a chair, with flaccid legs, and something like remorse seizing him inwardly. For one moment his infamy is borne in upon him by the lightning flash of conscience. Good Lord! One isn't perfect. And as the carriage that is bearing away his wife to her father rolls out of sight he is still sitting there, all upset.

But these impressions wear away, little by little. Evening comes on, and the Prussians have left village with fifes and drums, abandoning to their fate the three children and the wife of the woodcutter, who will die of hunger. And Jean Pegolan has recovered all his good spirits!

What will you?

His farm is safe!

RESULT OF PICTURE PUZZLE COMPETITION.

A very large proportion of those readers who entered for the Picture Puzzle Competition announced in *Short Stories* for April 25th succeeded in putting the squares together correctly. It has been decided to award the prize of £10 to the competitor who forwarded the neatest correct solution, and the fortunate person is Miss M. Belchier, 50, Avenue Road, South Tottenham, N.

The fifty readers whose names appear below have each been sent a gold-plated pencil-case as a consolation prize for the correctness and neatness of their attempt:

W. Hood, 16, Broadway, Stratford, London.
Miss E. Scarborough, 1, Palace Crescent, East Molesey, Surrey.
J. Waller, 18, St. John's Hill, Clapham Junction.
J. H. Hudson, 15, Tivoli Road, Crouch End.
M. E. Turner-Newton, 19, Queen's Road, Brighton.
C. H. Fisher, 127, Mornington Road, Leytonstone.
G. Bawyard, 163, Gwyder Street, Mill Road, Cambridge.
A. Hook, 9, Canterbury Place, Lambeth Road.
Miss A. Pugh, 10, Willington Road, Landor Road, Stockwell.
W. Martinyant, 212, Algernon Road, Ladywell.
W. Cater, 28, Palmerston Road, Forest Gate.
A. E. Bowles, 35, Weston Street, Bradford, Yorks.
B. C. Smythe, St. Anne's House, Lewes.
Mrs. Armstrong, 17, Elm Grove, Eccles New Road, Manchester.
A. Sprout, 1, Elm Grove, Eccles New Road, Weaste, Manchester.
J. Ward, 227, Tonge Moor Road, Bolton, Lancashire.
E. J. Embleton, 60, Victoria Road, Aldershot.
G. K. Stubbs, 29, Park Street, Macclesfield.
L. Carletti, 80, Malpas Road, Brockley.
Mrs. M. Gatsell, 61, Ravensworth View, Rectory Road, Gateshead.
Miss M. Clarkson, "Swinfield," Cantilupe Street, Hereford.
S. H. King, Laurel Cottage, Great Berkhamsted.
Miss L. Adair, 21, Crawford Square, Londonderry, Ireland.
W. H. Jones, 7, Llewelyn Street, Sketty, Swansea.
Mrs. H. J. Callander, 6, Brunton Terrace, Sunderland, Durham.
W. Mills, Percy House, Old Trafford, Manchester.
S. V. Key, West Brom Street, Oldbury, near Bingham.
F. E. Sparrow, 80, Burns Road, Harlesden, N.W.
Miss A. Winter, Albert Villa, Bishopston, Bristol.
A. Wake, 6, Chesham Road, Brighton.
Mrs. G. Archer, 5, South Terrace, Bury Street, Lower Edmonton.
W. H. Barrett, 178, Tindal Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.
F. H. Bottom, 190, Brooke Road, Clapton.
Mrs. S. J. Peacock, 72, Oxford Street, South Bank, Yorkshire.
H. Walker, 18, Cottrill Road, Dalston Lane, Hackney.
E. Newman, 2, Thanet Villas, Hanworth Road, Hounslow.
T. W. Lewis, Oswald Road, Oswestry, Salop.
H. W. Tinsley, 46, Rye Lane, Peckham.
N. G. Chambers, Belle Vue House, Durham.
J. A. Raven, 59, Alvington Crescent, High Street, Kingsland.
F. Santanbien, 11, Inverness Terrace, Burlington Road, S.W.
Miss F. Nuttall, 10, Stretton Road, The Fosse, Leicester.
R. Byford, 112, Caledonian Road, N.
J. R. Bell, 8, Great College Street, Westminster.
J. Needham, Lea Road, Gainsboro'.
S. M. Anderson, 5, Eldon Place, Barres Bridge, Newcastle-on-Tyne.
W. Robinson, 3, Landseer Street, Battersea Park Road.
G. T. Leake, 8, Rauleagh Road, South Belgravia, S.W.
G. Taylor, 28, Ernest Street, Rhyl, North Wales.
C. E. Warburton, Stocks View, Flixton, Manchester.

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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 10.—The Racial Antipathy of Mr. Enright.

"If my memory's dealin' a square game," remarked the old cattleman, as he moved his chair a bit more into the shade, "it's some'ers over on the foothills of the Floridas when Enright vouchsafes why he hates Mexicans.

"'Not that I loathes so much as I deplores 'em,' says Enright, the time I speaks of. 'However, I don't aim to be held as indorsin' of 'em or excusin' their existence; none whatever.'

"Enright's tellin' of this tale arises outen a trivial incident which a Mexican is the marrow of. We're out on the spring round-up an' we're combin' the draws an' dry arroyas over between the cow springs an' the Floridas, when one night a Mexican runs off a passel of our ponies.

"The hoss-bustler is asleep, I reckons, at the time this Mexican stacks in. He says himse'f he's layin' along the back of his bronco gazin' at the stars when the robber jumps at the ponies an' flaps a blanket or somethin,' an' away patters every hoof in the band.

"This yere Mexican don't run off with only about a handful. I takes it he can't round-up no more in the dark. When you stampedes a bunch of ponies that way they don't hold together like cattle, but plunges off diffusive. It's every bronco for himse'f, disdainful of all else, an' when it's sun-up you finds 'em spattered all over the scene an' not regardin' of each other much.

"But this yere Mexican, after he stampedes 'em huddles what he can together, as I says, mebby it's a dozen—and p'ints off into the hills.

"Of course it ain't no time when the sun shows the tracks till Enright, Jack Moore an' myse'f is on the trail. Tutt an' Dan Boggs wants so many from the round-up.

"It's one of the stolen ponies tips this greaser's hand. It's the second day and we all loses the trail, mebby it's fifteen minutes, an' we're smellin' along a canyon to find it agin, when from over a p'int of rocks we hears a bronco nicker. He gets the scent of an acquaintance which Moore's ridin' that away an' says 'How?' pony fashion.

"Thar's no need goin' into wearyin' details. Follerin' the nicker we comes surgin' in on our prey an' it's all over in a minute. Thar's two Mexicans, our criminal trackin' up with a pard that mornin'. But, of course, we all knows he's thar long hours back by the tracks, an' so it ain't no surprise.

"This yere second Mexican is downed on the go in. He shows a heap of interest in our comin' an' takes to shootin' us up mighty vivid, with a Winchester at the time, an' so Enright, who's close in by him, stretches him. He don't manage to do no harm, nohow, more'n he creases my hoss a little. However, as this yere hoss is some slothful an' bein' burnt that way with a bullet across the laig sorter livens him up a heap. I don't complain none. Still, Enright's all wise enough to copper the greaser for thar ain't no sayin' what luck the felon has with that little gun of his if he keeps on shootin'. So, as I observes, Enright downs him, an' his power-burnin' an' hoss-rustin' stops immejit.

"As for the other Mexican, which he's the party who jumps our ponies in the first place, he throws up his hands an' allows he cashes in his chips for whatever the bank says.

"So we all ropes out our captive; sorter hog-ties him hand an' foot, wrist and fetlock that night, an' goes into camp all comfortable, where we runs up on our game.

"'Whatever be we goin' to do with this yere hoss-thief prisoner of ours?' says Jack Moore to Enright, the next day when we're saddlin' up an organisin' to pull our freight. 'He's shore due to bother us a lot. We're plumb sixty miles from Tutt an' the boys, an' ridin', herd on this yere saddle-coloured gent a-keepin' of him from lopin' off, is mighty likely to be a heap exhaustive. I knows men,' Jack remarks at the close, lookin' wistful at Enright, 'as would beef him right yere an' leave him as a companion piece to that capadre of his you downs.'

"'Natures as would execute a prisoner in cold blood, which I don't mean they is low, neither but it's speshul inconsiderate that away to go an' ca'mly kill a prisoner an' no court or committee authorisin' the same. I never knows of it bein' done but once. It's Mexicans who does it then; which is why they ain't none popular with me since.'

"'It's shore you calls a mighty indurated play, some he'pless man you've took that away, but as I states it's due to bein' a heap fatiguin' keepin' cases on this yere Mexican till we meets up with a quorum of the committee. Still it's our dooty an' of course we don't deal double nor put back cards on what's our plain dooty.'

"'What you states,' says Enright, 'is to your credit, but I'll tell you. Thar ain't no harm mountin' this yere marauder on a slow pony that away; an' bein' humane sufficient to leave his hands an' feet untied. Of course, if he takes advantage of our leniency an' goes stampedin' off to make his escape some'ers along the trial I reckins you'll shorely have to shoot.'

"Well, it shore turns out this yere Mexican is ornery

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enough where the trail skirts the river to turn sudden an' go plungin' across. But Moore gets him in mid-stream. As he goes over the bronco's shoulder, hat first, he swings on the bridle long enough with his dyin' hand to turn the pony so it comes out agin on our side.

"'Which I'm glad he lives sufficient to head that hoss our way,' says Moore. 'It saves splashin' across after him an' wettin' your leggins a lot.'

"It's that night in camp when Moore brings up what Enright says about the time the Mexicans downs a prisoner an' fixes his views of 'em for good.

"'It's a long time back, this yarn to any excessive degree, even yet. It draws the cinch some tight an' painful, an' I don't teach my mind to dwell on it no more'n necessary.

"'This is all when I'm a boy; mebby I ain't twenty years yet. It's durin' the Mexican war. I gets a stack of white chips an' stands in on the deal in a boyish way. All I saveys of the war is it's agin the Mexicans, which, while I ain't got no feud with 'em personal at the time, makes it plenty satisfactory to me.

"'It's down off two days to the west of Chihuahua one day, an' seven of us is projectin' around seein' whatever can we tie down an' brand, when some Mexicans gets us out on a limb. It ain't what you calls a square deal; still I reckons it's square enough, too; only it's what you calls strategic, which is offensive an' sneakin' as a play.

"'This yere Lieutenant who's leadin' us 'round permiscus, looks like he's some romantic about a young Mexican female, who's called the Princess of Casa Grande, which the repoote of this yere princess woman is bad, an' I strikes a story several times how she's that incensed agin Americans she saws off a dose of loco on a captain in some whisky he's allowin' to drink, an' he goes plumb crazy an' is led away home, where he dies.

"'But loco or no loco, this yere princess person is shore that good lookin' a pinto pony don't compare thar with, an' she gets her black eyes on this Lieutenant, an' that settles it. We rounds up her hacienda an' goes into camp.

"'Besides the Lieutenant thar's six of us. One of 'em's a shorthorn, just my age, which his name's Willis—Jim Willis.

"'Now I ain't out to make no descriptions of the friendship which goes on between this yere Willis an' me. I sees a show one time, when pesterin' round back in St. Looey—an I'm yere to remark I don't go that far East no more—which takes on about a couple of sports, who's named Damon an' Pythias. These two people's all right, an' game square folks; an' they shore deems high of one another. But at the time I sees this yere Damon an' Pythias, I says to myse'f, an' ever since I makes no hesitatin' assertion tharof, that the brotherly views them two gents entertains ain't a marker to Jim Willis an' me.

"'This yere Jim I knows since we're yearlin's. We jumps outen the corral together, an' goes surgin' off into the Mexican war like twins. An' bein' two boys that away among a lot of men, I allows thar ain't nuthin' before, then, nor after, which I loves like Jim.

"'As I observes, Jim an' me's in the outfit, when this yere Lieutenant comes trackin' around that Princess of Casa Grande which her love for him is a bluff an' a deadfall; an' the same gets all of us before we're through. An' it gets my Jim Willis speshul.

"'Mebby it's the third mornin' after we all meanders into this nest of Mexicans an' the Lieutenant lines out for that Princess of Casa Grande. We ain't been turnin' out early nohow, thar bein' nuthin' to turn out about; but this third mornin' somebody arouses us a heap vigorous, like they aims to transact some business with us. Which they shortly did; it's an outfit of greasier guerillas, an' we-all ain't nuthin' more or less than captives.

"'The ornery an' ongrateful part is that the Princess sends one of her own peonies scoutin' round in the hills to bring in this band of cattle-eaters on to us.

"'When the Lieutenant hears of the perfidy of this Princess female he's that mortified he gets a pistol the first jump he makes, an' blows off the top of his head.

"'Which, if he only blows off the top of hers, it would have gone a heap further with the rest of us. If he'd consulted any of us, it would shorely have been advised. But he makes at impulsive play that away, an' is that sore and chagrined, jest as I spreads it before you, he grabs a gun in a frenzied way, an' cashes his chips abrupt.

"'No, as I states,' says Enright, musin' to himself, 'if the Lieutenant had only downed that Princess who plays us in as prisoners so smooth an' easy, it would have been regarded he could have gone caperin' over the brink after her with the bridle off the next second an' we still talk well of him.

"'As it is, however, this riotous female don't last two months. Which it's also a fact that takin' us at that time must have been a heap onlucky for them greasers. Thar's nine of 'em, an' every last one dies in the next five months; an' never a one, nor yet the Princess, knows what the're against when they quits; or what breeze blows their light out. I knows, because me an' a party whose name is Tate—Bill Tate—never leaves them hills till the last of that outfit's got his heap of rocks piled up, with his little pine cross stickin' outen the peak tharof, showin' he's done jumped this earthly game for good.

"'This Bill Tate an' me breaks camp on these greasers together, while they're tankin' up on mescal, mebby it's two days later; an' they never got their lariats on us no more.

"'"You ain't got no dates; no speshul engagements with nobody in the States, have you?" says Tate to me when we're safe outen these Mexican hands.

"'"No," says I, "whatever makes you ask?"

"'"Oh, nuthin," says Tate lookin' at the sky sorter black an ugly, "only since you has the elegant leesure, what for a play would it be to make a long camp back in these hills by some water-hole some'ers, an' stand pat ontil we downs these yere greasers—squaw an' all—who's had us treed? It oughter be did; an' if we all don't do it none, it's a heap likely it's goin' to be neglected an' overlooked complete. It's too easy as a play; every horse thief of 'em lives right in these yere valleys, for I hears 'em talk. All we has to do is sa'nter back in the hills a whole lot, make a camp, an' pains we bushwacks an' kills the last one."

"'The way I feels about Willis makes the prospect mighty allurin', an' tharupon Tate an' me opens a game with these Mexicans it takes five months to deal.

"'But it's dealt plumb out, an' we win. When Tate crosses the Rio Grande with the army goin' back, he shorely has the skelp of every Mexican concarned.

"'But I wander from Willis. Where was I when I bogs down? As I says, this Lieutenant nabs a pistol an' goes flutterin' from his roost. But this don't do for these greasers. They puts up a claim that some American track up on one of their outfit an' kills him off, they says five days before. They allows that

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breakin' even on the deal one of us is due to die. Tate offers to let 'em count the Lieutenant, but they shakes their heads till the little bells on their sombreros tinklen, an' declines the Lieutenant emphatic.

"'They p'ints out this yere Lieutenant dies in his own game, on his own deal. It's no racket of theirs an' it don't go to match the man they're shy.

"'One of us six who's left has to die to count even for this greaser who's been called in them five days. Tate can't move 'em; all he says is no use, so he quits, an' as he's been talkin' Spanish, which the same is too muddy a language for the rest of us, Tate turns in an' tel's us how the thing stacks up.

"'"One of us is shorely elected to trail out after the Lieutenant," says Tate. "The rest they holds as prisoners. Either way, she's goin' to be a hard deep crossin' an' one's about as rough a toss as the other."

"'After a brief pow-wow the greaser who's actin' range boss for the outfit puts six beans in a buckskin bag. Five is white an' one's black. These greasers are on the gamble bigger'n wolves, an' they crowds round plenty gleeful to see us take a gambler's chance for our lives. The one of us who draws the black bean is to line out after the Lieutenant.

"'Sayin' something in Spanish which most likely means "Age before beauty," the Mexican makes Willis an' me stand back while the four others searches one after the other into the bag for his bean.

"'Tate goes first an' wins a white bean.

"'Then a shiftless, no-count party whom we all call "Chicken Bill," reaches in. I shorely hopes, seein' it's bound to be somebody, that this Chicken Bill acquires the black bean. But luck's agin us, Chicken Bill backs out with a white bean.

"'When the third turns out a white bean the shadow begins to fall across Jim Willis an' me. I looks at Jim, an' I gives it to you straight when I says that I ain't at that time thinkin' of myse'f so much as about Jim. To see this yere deal, black as midnight, closin' in on Jim is what's hurtin'; it don't somehow occur to me I'm likewise agin the iron myself.

"'"Looks like this yere amiable device of them greasers is due to run its brand on to one of us," says Jim to me, as I looks at him.

"'An' then, as the fourth man finds a white bean in the bag, an draws a deep sigh an' stands back, Jim says: "Well Sam, it's down to us."

"'Then Jim looks at me keen an' steady a whole lot; an' the Mexicans rather enjoyin' of the situation, ain't goadin' of us to hurry up none.

"'Now, when it's to Jim an' me they select me as the one to p'int up the next bean. Jim's still lookin' at me hard, an I sees the water start in his eye.

"'"Let me have your draw, Sam," he says.

"'"Shore," I replies, standin' a step off from the bag. "It's yours too quick."

"'But the Mexicans don't see it that away. It's my turn and my draw, an' Jim has to take what's left. So the Mexicans tells Tate to send me after my bean agin.

"'"Hold on a second, Sam," says Jim, an' by this time he's as steady as a church.

"'"Sam," he goes on, "thar's no use you all gettin' the short end of this. Thars reasons for you livin'; which my case is void tharof. Now let me ask you; are you up on beans? Can you tell a black from a white bean by the feel?"

"'"No," I says, "beans is all a heap the same to me."

"'"That's what I allows," goes on this Jim. "Now yere's where my sooperior knowledge gets in. If these Mexicans had let me draw for you I fixes it easy, but it looks like they has scrooples. But I listen to what I tells you, an' you beats the deal as it is. Thar's a difference in beans sames as in ponies. A black bean is rough like a cactus compared to white beans, which said last vegetable is shorely as sleek an' smooth as glass. Now here's what you does. Jest grope an' scout 'round in that bag till you picks out the smooth bean. That's your bean; that's the white bean. Cinch the smooth bean an' the black comes to me."

"'When Jim says all this it seems like I'm in a daze an' sorter woozy. I never doubt him for a moment. Of course I don't take no advantage of what he says.

"'I recalls the advice my old mother gives me; it's long enough ago now. The old lady says: "Samyul, never you let me hear of your weakenin'. Be a man, or a mouse, or a long-tail rat." So, when Jim lays it off about these two beans bein' smooth an' rough that way; an' the white bein' the smooth bean, I nacherally searches out the rough bean, allowin' she'll shore be black, which shows my intellect's can't cope with Jim's none.

"'The bean I bring to the surface is white an' pale as a ghost. My heart wilts inside of me, an' I feels white as the bean where it lays in my hand. Of course I'm some young them days, an' I feels white as the bean where it lays in my hand. Of course I'm some young them days, and it don't need so much to stagger me.

"'I recollects like it was in a dream hearin' Jim laugh.

"'"Sam," he says, "I reads you like so much sunshine. An' I shorely fools you up a lot. Don't you reckon I allows you'll double on the trail, p'int south if I says no'th at a show like this? The white bean is allers the rough, sandy bean; allers was an' allers will be; an' never let no one fool you up agin. An' now, Sam, *adios*."

"'I'm still standin' lookin' at the white bean. I feels Jim grip my other hand, as he says, "*Adios*," an' the next I hears is the bang of the Mexicans' guns. I starts up, some wild an' locoed, so Tate tells me, when the guns goes off. But Jim's dead then. He's out in a second, never bats an eye nor wags an ear.

"'Which now,' says Enright at the end, as he yanks his saddle 'round so he makes a piller for his head, 'which now you all is fully informed why I appears averse to greasers, I reckon I slumbers some. I never sees one I don't think of that boy Jim Willis, an' I never thinks of Jim but I wants to murder Mexicans.'

"Enright don't say no more; sorter rolls up in his blanket, drops his head in his saddle, an' lays a long time quiet, like he's asleep. Jack Moore an' me ain't sayin' nuthin', jest peerin' into the fire an' listenin' to the coyotes, without heedin' of neither. At last Enright raises his head off the saddle some.

"'Mebby it's twenty years ago when a party over on the Rio Grande allows as how Jim's aimin' to deal himse'f a hand from the bottom of the deck, when he onfolds to me about the habits of them beans. It takes seven months, a iron constitution, an' three medicine sharps, an' each as good as Doc. Peets, before he's regarded as outen danger.'"

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The Great Middlewick Bank Robbery.

CHAPTER XIX.

At the same time that Alfred Taylor was talking to Miss Denton, his friend Burton was walking towards the Middlewick Bank. It was past ten o'clock, and he was confident of finding the Manager there. He wished to see him. Having resumed the disguise he wore when first he came to Middlewick he was recognised as the trusted watchman chiefly concerned in capturing the criminals—and had, it may be said, become the hero of the town. It was impossible for him not to hear the complimentary remarks continually made about him as he went along.

Here and there he saw groups of people talking together, their admiring looks and gestures leaving no doubt that he was the subject of their remarks. He caught some of the observations of those whom he met face to face and was obliged to acknowledge the salutations of smiling townspeople whom he never remembered to have seen, but who insisted upon claiming acquaintanceship.

It will be understood therefore that when he entered the bank he was respectfully greeted and no questions were asked when he walked towards the Manager's room. Of course, everyone now understood what it meant when he took the position of watchman to the bank. It was to secure a chance which could best be gained by that little subterfuge.

Jack Burton was one of the cleverest detectives in London. To him belonged the credit of outwitting and imprisoning four of the most desperate criminals of the day, for the news had spread that he had lodged another, and the last, in goal. Jack Burton, as we shall continue to call him for a short while longer, encountered a slight disappointment; when he knocked and then pushed open the door of Mr. Bryant's room, the latter was empty.

He returned and spoke to the cashier.

"Do you know when Mr. Bryant will be in?"

The cashier glanced at the clock on the wall.

"We're expecting him every moment. I can't imagine what detains him."

"I will wait a little while."

"Won't you step into his room?"

"No, thanks, I'll take the settee, that is if Warren doesn't come in and claim it," added Burton with a smile, going over and sitting down.

The visitor hoped that the Manager would not arrive for a little while. He had secured a good point of view and wanted to look around him also for a few minutes, not forgetting also to use his ears.

Rutherford was busy at his desk. He cast a glance at the visitor and then bent over his work again. That single turn of his head revealed a distressed countenance which told of an almost intolerable load he was bearing on his young shoulders.

Business was brisk for a time and then came a lull, such as is occasionally seen in similar concerns. Rutherford turned his head again, but this time it was towards the cashier, to whom he spoke so quietly that but for the unusual silence Burton would have been unable to overhear the words.

"I think I must have a rest this afternoon, Stewart."

"You don't look well," was the cashier's sympathetic response. "What's the matter, influenza?"

"No, not that, but I've been out of sorts some days now. I hope a quiet afternoon will put me right again."

"Why wait till after lunch? Go home now and get the benefit of the day."

"It sounds tempting, but it wouldn't be fair to you, with so much to do."

"I can manage very well without you."

"Thanks all the same, but I'd really rather wait till midday," and to signify the question was settled, the bookkeeper turned to his work again.

Burton arose, and with a semi-military salute to the cashier said:

"It's hardly worth while my waiting longer for Mr. Bryant. I can drop in later, when he will be here."

"I'm sure he will be glad to see you," replied the cashier, returning the salutation.

At the next corner, Burton saw Mr. Bryant walking towards the bank. He had only to cross the street to greet him, but this he took care not to do. It looked as if, like his friend Taylor, he had changed his mind about wishing to meet the head of the bank.

Between two and three o'clock on the afternoon of that day, Rutherford, who had returned home under the plea of illness, came out of the door of the modest cottage with his coat closely buttoned and swinging a small cane in his hand. He walked slowly, as if with considerable suffering. He looked nervous and in need of the fresh spring air.

As he walked, he glanced to the right and left, but seeing no one in whom he was interested, moved in the direction of Mr. Bryant's residence, moderating his pace still more as he passed it, and looking up at the same window to which he had signalled some nights before.

The eyes, roving along the handsome front of the dwelling, were rewarded by a sight of Miss Denton, who was expecting him. She smiled and waved her hand; he lifted his hat in reply, and passed on. She stood at the window, gazing fondly after him as long as he was in sight, but he did not again look behind him.

At the first corner young Rutherford turned to the right and quickened his pace. The noticeable fact about his course was that he was now facing the open country and thus leaving the little town of Middlewick behind him. The further he went, the more rapidly he walked. It did not take him long to get out of Middlewick, when he struck out like a pedestrian training. He swung his light cane jauntily above his head, occasionally whipping the branches of some overhanging trees at the side of the road.

A colt was cropping the grass so close to the fence that Rutherford reached over and gave him a smart blow on his side. The startled animal, wheeled, let fly with both heels at the offender and galloped a hundred yards away in the pasture, when he stopped, faced him and snorted angrily at him as if challenging the young fellow to climb the fence and have it out. Altogether the book-keeper of the Middlewick Bank behaved like any person except an invalid.

A light farm waggon clattered along the road over the same course as that taken by Rutherford. The vehicle seemed in the last stages of dilapidation, and the single horse between the shafts made spasmodic attempts at a trot, urged thereto by the blows of his driver, the jerking of the reins, and some vigorous language. Such bursts of of speed were not continued long before the animal dropped abruptly to a walk again. This being slower than the pedestrian caused the farmer to fall behind, while the occasional spurts lessened the space between them.

The driver's appearance was in keeping with his horse and waggon. His shaggy hair fell about his shoulders from under his ragged hat. His clothes were old and of the fashion of years gone by. He sat on the right side of the single seat, holding the reins in his left hand, while his right was busily employed with the whip, which produced little effect upon the bony horse.

For half a mile the highway led through an attractive

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region with well-kept farms on either side. It was just the sort of spring weather for work, and numbers of boys and men were in the fields, but less than a mile away. Rutherford made another turn in the course he was following. This took him into a less frequented road and left towards a long stretch of rocky woods, which rose into hills of several hundred feet elevation beyond.

The ground being somewhat hilly and the distance to this point having been rapidly traversed, the young man showed signs of fatigue. He slackened his pace from the moment of entering on his new course. It was then that he looked searchingly around him. If he was hunting for anything, he did not find it, which fact it is to be assumed was not displeasing to him.

Meanwhile the old farmer who was having such a laborious time with his nag, turned into the less frequented road, though, as he expressed it, he was obliged almost to "almost saw his head off." Rutherford looked back with an amused expression, but gave the farmer and his animal no further attention.

At a distance of probably a quarter of a mile, the road entered the woods alluded to, where there was no fence on either side, and the ruts showed that days had passed since any vehicle had traversed the route. Rutherford had slackened pace again and had not penetrated far among the trees when he turned for the last time, moving at right angles to the highway.

On this occasion he did not follow any particular path, but passed among the trees as if guiding his steps by means of some landmark. The farmer had forced his steed to a trot once more and he went by the point where the foot-passenger had turned off with a fine display of speed. The figure of the pedestrian was seen now and then amongst the trees but they soon entirely hid him from the sight of anyone in the road. He did not look round at the waggon but walked straight on. A little way ahead the road made a turn to the left. The farmer did not go far along this, before he drew up to one side, so that he and his waggon would be out of the way of anyone passing along the highway. The horse was then forced among the trees when, with surprising nimbleness, the driver leapt out and hastily tied the halter to the limb of a tree.

Anyone studying the old man while thus engaged would have observed that his corduroy trousers were tucked in the top of his heavy boots, while the slouching coat descended to his knees and was secured in front by a single button, all the rest being gone. The observant spectator would have noticed another thing, that same frowsy farmer was well-formed and evidently was not only active in movement, but exceptionally powerful.

After securing the animal in a grassy patch, the man started diagonally in the direction taken by Rutherford a short time before. This course, if continued, and provided the other followed a straight line, must bring them together ere long. He walked like one accustomed to that kind of exercise, and was on the look-out for the young man who had turned off in the woods before he pulled up his horse at the side of the highway.

Burton, for the farmer was no other, had followed Rutherford all the way from Middlewick and he did not intend to lose him now, when it was evident that the one in advance had not the slightest suspicion of the trick which was being played on him.

"That young man can't be far off," he muttered as he advanced cautiously, "and I must be careful."

Despite the skill with which he moved, he narrowly escaped making a fatal blunder. The path wound in and out among the trees in such a way that it was impossible to see more than a few paces in advance. He was moving forward, as guardedly as possible, when he caught sight of his man a little in advance. But for the fact that Rutherford's back was towards him, he must have been discovered.

The startled Burton dodged behind the nearest tree, large enough to shelter his body, and removing his worthless hat, peered stealthily from his point of vantage.

Rutherford had also made use of a similar shelter, although it was not as large as that of the watchman, and he too was peeping at something apparently but a few feet away. Whatever it was, the thickness of the trees prevented its discovery by Burton. There must be a change of position before anything could be accomplished. This came about sooner than the watchman anticipated. Evidently Rutherford was dissatisfied with his post, for he stepped softly behind the tree and moved stealthily along the path, as if fearful that his footsteps would arouse someone in the vicinity. Suddenly he looked round and then resumed his advance in the same guarded manner as before. The winding path soon hid him from sight, and, at that moment, Burton emerged from behind his tree and followed him.

This peculiar course continued for but a few minutes, when the result was all that the watchman could desire. The path led into a natural opening clear of trees, though rocks and boulders were numerous. Rutherford had again sheltered himself and the man in the rear lost no time in doing the same.

The opening was less than half an acre in extent and standing near the centre was a third person, well-dressed, though fully as old as Jack Burton. The attitude of this individual was peculiar. His two hands were thrust into the pockets of his light overcoat, thus causing the end of his cane to project upwards behind his shoulder. He wore a tall silk hat, and his attitude and manner were those of a person meditating a step which he hesitates to take. He was upright, and kept glancing searchingly around him. Once he took several steps forward, then abruptly stopped and retreated again. This advance brought him close to the largest rock in sight. Something about that interested him. Rutherford was so absorbed in watching this person, that there was not the slightest chance of his looking behind him. The shifting, vacillating action of the third party, brought his countenance as distinctly into view as that of Mr. Bryant himself. Burton saw it, and it was so impressed upon his memory, that it will remain with him through life.

The singular hesitation could not last long. The person must decide one way or another. As if impatient with himself, he roused his energies, walked to the side of the rock, looked furtively round, and was in the act of stooping, when he abruptly stopped.

Frank Rutherford, in his agitation, had betrayed himself. He stepped from behind the sheltering tree, and as he did so, the man by the rock discovered him.

CHAPTER XX.

Rather singularly, Jack Burton very nearly committed the same blunder. Had he stood as near to the third man as did the younger, he would have been seen at the same moment; but he was sufficiently alert to return to his hiding-place in time to avoid detection.

"I wouldn't be in that book-keeper's shoes for something," was his conclusion. "There's safe to be a row."

The elder man, upon discovering that he was being watched, assumed an upright position and stood for several seconds staring at the young man. The conduct of the latter, under the embarrassing circumstances, was not lacking in a certain dignity. Instead of seeking to screen himself from recognition, he calmly walked forward and confronted the alderman.

"You scoundrel!" thundered the latter, with his cane upraised. "What do you mean by following me?"

The tones were so loud that they could have been heard considerably further away than where the watchman stood. But Rutherford's reply was in such a quiet tone that the listener did not catch a word of what was said.

"You have no business to follow me," continued the irate third party. "I'll thrash you within an inch of your life. What do you mean by such conduct?".

Again came the answer was so softly uttered that not a syllable reached the listener's ear. The stranger was gesticulating earnestly.

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"If I could only get near enough to learn what is going on, it would prove worth listening to, I suspect; but that is impossible. They would be sure to detect me, and then their combined wrath would descend upon *my* head."

For ten minutes the couple stood close together in the path, engaged in a low but exciting conversation. By-and-bye the observant watchman saw that Rutherford was doing nearly all the talking. The other listened attentively, but answered by shaking his head, swinging his cane, and shifting the weight of his body from one foot to the other as a person is apt to do when under great mental excitement.

Presently they turned round and began slowly walking along the path towards the highway where the watchman had left his horse and cart.

This brought them so near to the eavesdropper that he dared not peep out from his hiding place. Nor was the risk of discovery counterbalanced by the distinctness with which he could overhear their conversation. Apparently each was so busy with his own thoughts that not a word passed between them until they had gone so far down the path that they were quite out of hearing.

Instead of following them, Burton waited till they had disappeared behind a curve in the path, when he turned towards the open space near him.

Meanwhile the others, following the winding trail until they came into the highway, when once again, and for the last time, they halted. For half-an-hour or more they faced each other, and talked like men deciding a question of life and death. The beauteous spring day drew to a close, the sun went down behind the hills, and the twilight gathered over forest and meadow, and still they talked and argued, grew angry, and then became cool, then one was sullen and then again each became interested.

But with the coming of night, the long-deferred decision was reached. Whatever the cause of dispute, it was settled between them, though apparently on the strange condition that Rutherford should leave the other to return to Middlewick, his companion remaining behind—for that was what took place.

The young man emerged from the deeper gloom of the wood into the open country and walked towards the town. The person from whom he had parted remained at the side of the highway gazing after him. His attitude was that of profound reverie.

Suddenly a waggon rattled along the road, journeying towards the town. The man instinctively stepped aside to allow it to pass, but paid no further attention.

"Hi, there, is that your team up yonder? If it is you'd better make a move, for the old horse has been standing there for hours."

The farmer who called to the other sat in an ordinary country waggon, and spoke in a voice loud enough to be heard a hundred yards away. The individual addressed looked up at him, but made no answer, and the farmer drove on, wondering what strange business could be going on so near his own home.

Night was now fairly well advanced, and the moon was shining. The person in the road unfolded his arms, heaved a deep sigh and turned into the woods. He was following the path over which he had already passed twice. Avoiding with care the dense overhanging vegetation, he followed the narrow trail until he once more stood by the rock in the clearing where he had discovered he was being watched.

Stooping down, he slipped his arm beneath the rock in search of something. The next moment he straightened himself, pressed his hands to his temples, and staggered like a drunken man.

"Heaven help me! it is gone," he moaned. Then, wildly hoping that some mistake had been made, he sprang back to the rock. "No, no! it cannot be! it cannot be! It was a mistake!"

He was now furiously scrambling with his hand under the great stone, as though he would overturn the enormous weight in his fierce effort to find something.

"No, it *is* gone. It has been stolen. I am ruined! I am ruined!"

CHAPTER XXI.

As Burton walked towards the highway, after leaving the two men, all sorts of conjectures flitted through his active brain.

"There can be no doubt that *something* is hidden under that rock," and he was about to bring it forth at the moment he made the discovery that another was watching him. That caused a change of purpose, and he made for the young man with the intention of giving him a hiding.

"I can't understand why he didn't. Rutherford must possess a persuasive tongue thus quickly to soothe his wrath. But the appearance of the other is so striking, that he may have attracted the attention of some one else beside the book-keeper and me. Well, I declare!"

It was at this point of his soliloquy that the very peril Burton had in mind appeared. Two forms were observed moving on the other side of the opening, and it hardly needed a second glance to identify them as a couple of tramps.

"They have seen the other and suspect the business that brought him here," was the conclusion of the watchman; "but they do not know where to look for the package. Had the visitor taken it from under the rock, they would have robbed him of it; but they expect him back, and then they will have a chance of getting it."

Convinced that he was right in his surmise, the question arose as to what he should do under the new conditions. Should he also wait, and warn the imperilled man. That would never do, for the ensuing complication would overturn all the plans he had formed; the whole scheme, in fact, would be spoiled. Of all the ideas that suggested themselves, there seemed but one thing to do. This required nerve, but that had never yet failed Burton.

He emerged from the shadow of the wood and made his way at a timid pace toward the rock which was such an interesting object to three persons just at this time. He paused every few steps and glanced furtively about as if afraid of being noticed. He showed no knowledge of the presence of the tramps, who, on catching sight of him, made haste to dodge down out of view. But Burton knew that two pairs of bleared eyes were watching his every movement.

Every feature of the forest opening was fixed so clearly in his mind that it was impossible to make a mistake, even in the gathering twilight. He halted at the precise spot where he had seen the other man stand, when about to stoop for a purpose that was self evident to the watcher. With a hurried glance round Burton dropped upon his knees and pushed his hand under the rock. Beneath it was a sufficiently large space to feel about with ease, but only a few seconds of groping were necessary, when his hand came in contact with *something*.

He recognised the touch of paper, and with a suppressed exclamation drew out an oblong package five or six inches thick, somewhat longer and not so wide. Instead of being tied with tape or twine, it was bound round with several strong elastic bands which held whatever was within in the smallest possible compass.

It was hardly the time, in view of what he knew about the tramps, for him to make an examination, but he could not resist the temptation. He deftly shifted enough of the bands to allow him to pull away the heavy paper from one end, and to gain a glimpse of what was within. He raised the end and looked at several of the oblong slips.

"I've got it!" gasped the finder. "Here is the whole £20,000 that was stolen from the Middlewick Bank several nights ago!"

Only the recollection of the two vagrants crouching among the rocks and boulders enabled Burton to retain his self-possession. The package of money was a big one, but he could handle it without difficulty. Under his flimsy outer coat was another one, strong and well made. Opening the front of this, he pushed the bundle carefully in to an inner pocket and buttoned the garment over it.

As he anticipated, he had hardly faced about, with the

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appearance of retracing his own steps, when the tramps rose from their hiding-place. A collision was inevitable, and Burton was prepared for it. He paused, as if startled, and stood still as they approached.

The couple were edging towards Burton with a purpose too manifest to be mistaken, and he saw that it would not do to trifle with them.

"Look here, guv'nor," said the more disreputable of the two threateningly, "if you don't give me back my package you took from under that there rock, my pal and I'll have to help ourselves. It's hard if a honest man can't leave his own in a safe place."

"Go along," was Burton's gruff reply. "The stones aren't yours. I put them there myself."

"That yer didn't! we did, we——"

"That proves the package isn't yours then, for it doesn't contain stones at all, and if you don't clear off, I'll shoot," said Burton, with a sudden change of front, seeing only too plainly that the tramp's threat was no idle one.

The moon had risen while this little affair was going on in the forest opening. The foremost tramp had just prepared for a leap upon the supposed farmer when he recoiled at the sight of the gleaming pistol, whose muzzle almost touched his nose. More than that, one of the chambers was discharged, the bullet nipping his ear, while a second whistled by the crimson countenance of his companion just behind him.

"That's just to let you know I'm ready for you," remarked Burton. "The next time I shoot, I'll kill you."

Without waiting to see whether or no he would carry out his threat, the two men dashed out of sight with ludicrous haste. Although their flight proved beyond doubt that they were defenceless, save for their own brute force, Burton yet took every precaution against giving them the slightest clue to his movements. With the utmost care he began a withdrawal from the spot, changing his course so that his enemies could not keep track of him, provided they did not hear the rustling of the leaves.

It was not necessary for him to go far before resuming the direct course to the highway. The straining ear detected no sound like that which had warned him of his peril, and he became confident that he had thrown the vagrants off his trail. This was unquestionably a great point accomplished, for when he repeatedly stopped and listened, he failed to hear anything alarming. Finally he dismissed all apprehension and advanced with less care than before.

But in thus protecting himself against one danger, Burton fell into an unsuspected dilemma. The several changes of direction, with no beaten path or landmark to guide him, resulted in a confusion of the points of the compass, as is inevitably the case with the most experienced ranger of the woods.

When certain that he had travelled far enough to reach the highway where he had left his horse and waggon, he was still among the trees, enveloped in gloom and with no idea of where he stood.

"I believe I am lost," he said with a shiver of dread, "and, if that is so, there's no chance of finding my way out before morning."

While the prospect was anything but pleasant, there was nothing in it, after all, to cause misgiving. The wayfarer found some consolation in smoking a cigar. By keeping the glowing tip free of ashes he was able to use it as a tiny lamp, now and then, and thus save himself some unwelcome experiences. But soon the weed was consumed, and growing tired of the enjoyment, he flung away the stump.

"I'll try a little longer—helloa!"

It was the neigh of a horse that caused this exclamation. It sounded to his left, not in the direction, as it seemed, of the highway; but, remembering his mistake, he turned towards the point, and had not gone far when, to his delight, he came across the horse and waggon with which he had come from Middlewick hours before

So far as could be perceived in the darkness, the beast had not attempted to stir from his position since Burton had tied him there. But, remembering the interval had been long enough for him to become hungry, the man quickly unfastened the horse, climbed into the waggon, and took the reins and whip in hand. There was no need, however, of the latter, for, to the amazement of the driver, the animal instantly broke into a gentle trot which he seemed disposed to keep up the entire way home.

Shortly after turning in to the main road, Burton discerned a man ahead of him, walking quite rapidly. By this time the moon was well up in the sky, and he could see so distinctly that he recognised him as the one that had stood in the clearing and was about to take the package of money from under the rock when he desisted because of the presence of the book-keeper of the bank.

This individual, having partly rallied from his shock, was hurrying towards the town. He was in the middle of the road, but on hearing the rattle of the waggon behind him, stepped aside to allow it to pass.

As he came up alongside of him, Burton checked his horse.

"Have a lift, sir," he asked, looking down at the man.

"No thank you. I prefer to walk."

"I am going straight to Middlewick, and it will save you some time, for this animal, as you see, is a good goer."

Thus urged the pedestrian accepted the invitation, climbed nimbly up beside Burton, who once more started his horse at a trot.

It seemed like running a great risk, for he could not be certain that his passenger would not recognise him. Brief as had been his stay in Middlewick, he had been there long enough for many of the inhabitants to learn who he was.

It need hardly be said, however, that when he assumed the guise of a farmer, on applying at the livery stable for this wretched turn-out, he donned something in the nature of a disguise besides his shabby garments, while in keeping with his assumed character the watchman imparted a broad and peculiar accent to his voice while speaking to his passenger. But the latter was in no mood for talking. His responses, when there were any, were so curt that the pretended farmer soon gave up the attempt.

It was a strange situation indeed.

Arrived at the outskirts of the town, the passenger requested Burton to allow him to get out. He courteously thanked the supposed farmer for his kindness and disappeared along the main street, while the driver turned in the direction of the livery stable, where, after considerable difficulty, he had managed to hire the outfit.

It was not very late in the evening, and he managed to restore himself to something like his original appearance without attracting attention to the process. His old hat, with the hair and chin-whiskers attached, was slipped into his coat pocket; he smoothed down his trousers, and folded the shabby coat and carried it over his arm. This was so effective that when he presented himself at his lodgings he was admitted without question.

When certain he was quite alone, he unbuttoned his coat after carefully locking the door, drew out the package he had extracted from beneath the rock, and opened and counted the contents. There was exactly £20,000, the very amount stolen from the Middlewick Bank, and here it was in his hands, ready to be restored to the rightful owner.

He recalled the peculiar circumstances under which he had recovered it. If he chose he might retain every penny of it, and no suspicion could ever attach to him. Not a living soul besides himself knew that he had visited the woods and taken it from under the rock where it was hidden. Even if the tramps chose to tell their story, it could not turn the eye of the law to him. The farmer, who was the chief actor in that little drama, had gone out of existence.

(To be concluded.)

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Two Prizes of £1 1s. Each.

BELOW will be found the second batch of ten problems in the new series of "THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM." Two prizes of a guinea each is offered weekly to those competitors who answer correctly the greatest number of these problems. Consolation prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

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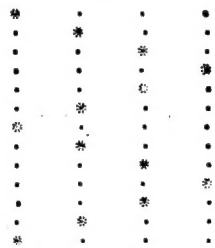
1. All solutions to be written on one sheet of paper.
2. Don't write the questions. Simply put the numbers and the answer against each.
3. Each set to contain the £100 coupon (found on second page of cover) for the current week.
4. All attempts to be in by Monday, May 18th.
5. Mark your envelope "Gymnasium."

(11.) Example: Behead "to put over" and leave "not under." Solution: C-OVER.
Solve the following problems in the same way:
(a) Behead "to dry" and leave "wet."
(b) Behead "a grain" and leave "frozen water."
(c) Behead "trifling" and leave "not heavy."
(d) Behead "to stop up" and leave "a curl."
(e) Behead "to draggle" and leave "a noisy crowd."
(f) Behead "a blow" and leave "the blues."

(12.)



Place the words defined below one on top of the other in their proper order, and the letters which fall on every asterisk on the above diagram will form a word signifying "additional."

1. A piece of music.
2. A kitchen utensil.
3. To be dull.
4. A stinging insect.
5. A high wind.
6. To repair.
7. To pull about.
8. A family quarrel.
9. Poison.
10. A sudden squall.
11. A small insect.
12. To worship.
13. To couple.

(13.) Place the words defined below—each of which consists of four letters—one on the other.
1. To tie together.
2. A loud sound.
3. An operatic air.
4. Voluble.
The initials, read downwards, signify to boast.
The initials, read upwards, signify clothing.
The finals, read upwards, signify a poet.
The finals, read downwards, signify a colour.

(14.) The number of periodicals issued from this office in the course of a year is about 36,034,476. How long would it take the editor to carry them, a quire of 26 copies at a time, to Messrs. Smith and Son's premises, assuming that each journey there and back occupied 23 minutes? Give the answer in years, weeks (not months), days, hours, minutes, seconds, and a fraction of a second, if necessary.

(15.) MIXED VERSE.

I cedrpetae nda rteamicep teh lolfy
Fo vignig dewding serpents lal teh hilwe,
Het lapn sah euacsd a testled lamholeyen
Ot drobo herwe cone herte saw a leapings limes.

Yin refidns, ti messe, rea swalay tegting ramried,
Heirt diewndgs ot my rovingsees wef vige swing,
Ym cavant spure oto goln het dola sih racdier
Fo yubgin rof hetm reptyt, succels singth.

(16.) The initials of the words defined below spell the name of a well-known novel, and the finals the pseudonym of the author.
1. The surname of the hero of one of Sir Walter Scott's novels.
2. To obstruct.
3. The foundress of Carthage.
4. Misfortune.
5. A heavy piece of timber.
6. To instruct.
7. A collection of wild beasts.
8. A naval officer.
9. A biblical word meaning "a master."
10. A precious stone carved in relief.
11. A Prince of Denmark.

(17.) The letters of what word on this and the preceding page may be transposed the greatest number of times to form other words, every letter being used in each case? Give the transpositions.
Example: TIMES. Smite, mites, items, etc.

(18.) The first letter of the word forming the solution to this problem is contained in the word "cape" but not in "coat," the second in "wheat" but not in "oat," the remaining letters being disposed of in the following words:
In "pen" but not in "paper."
In "candle" but not in "taper."
In "wink" but not in "nod."
In "plaice" but not in "cod."
In "jam" but not in "honey."
In "cash" but not in "money."
In "drake" but not in "swan."
In "lover" but not in "don."
In "rough" but not in "smooth."
In "salvation" but not in "Booth."
The complete word represents the name of a class of manufacturers whose work is well-known to the readers of our papers. What is the word?

(19.) Those who succeed in making the best anagrams out of the following titles to pieces of music to be found in MELODY will be counted correct:
1. Dear Mother England.
2. March of the Little Tin Soldiers.
3. Awake Sweet Love.
4. Shepherd of Souls.
5. The Hour of Love.

(20.) The word forming the solution to this problem is the name of a county in England. The numbers indicate the relative position of the letters contained in the word.
Example: FORTH. 1, 2, 3, 4, spell "a fortified place."
Problem:
1. 1, 4, 5, 10, spell "finished."
2. 6, 7, 2, 1, spell "a hovel."
3. 7, 8, 9, 10, spell "to borrow."
4. 6, 7, 8, 5, spell "a part of the leg."
5. 1, 4, 3, 2, spell "a bird."
6. 6, 7, 4, 5, 2, spell "did shine."
7. 9, 4, 1, 10, spell "did ride."
8. 9, 10, 5, 1, 2, 9, spell "to inflict."
9. 7, 4, 5, 10, spell "a sharpening stone."
10. 10, 3, 2, 5, spell "level."

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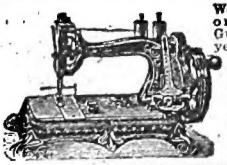

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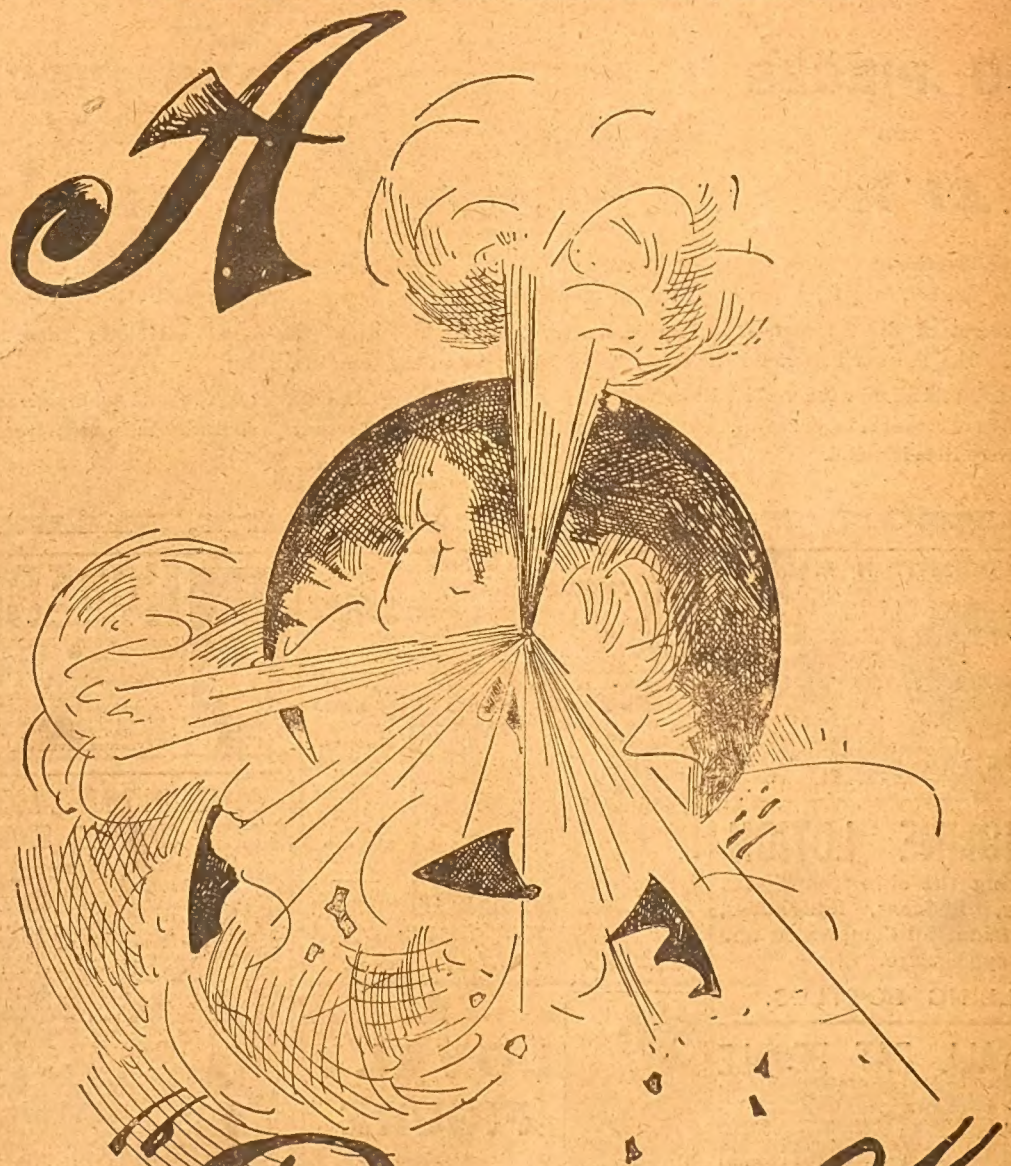

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